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L. C. KNIGHTS H. A. MASON
F. R. LEAVIS

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MEDIEVAL IDIOM IN SHAKESPEARE

(I) SHAKESPEARE AND THE LITURGY.

IT is just three hundred years since influential thinkers in England began to consider civilization as a process of liberation from medieval forces. Today, however, it is impossible to have the assurance, common even thirty years ago, that the Middle Ages were merely a prelude to our own nobler world. Such a shift in historical and cultural thinking is bound to have effects on literary criticism. In the following notes I wish to suggest that the new depth, pliability and range which Shakespeare's style achieves about 1600 results to a great extent from an increased power to make effective dramatic use of a number of medieval convictions and attitudes.

From about the time of writing *Julius Caesar,* without abandoning anything of what he had learnt from the ancients and his contemporaries (from Kyd, Marlowe, and aristocratic taste), Shakespeare began to draw on folk beliefs which in spite of, and even because of, the Reformation, were in 1600 very much what they had been in 1400.[1] Some of the reasons for the new direction which his genius took about 1600 are fairly obvious; the unceasing competition in the theatre world compelled him to search constantly for new materials and methods; it was not by accident that he remained serenely popular for so long. Besides, he very probably felt that the literary modes set in operation by Petrarch and Lyly culminated in *Twelfth Night*; polish, neatness, refinement, urbanity of language, the feeling of a whole aristocratic culture behind the writer—these things could hardly be developed much farther; he could not, in the meantime at least, improve on *Twelfth Night* as *Twelfth Night* improved on *A Comedy of Errors*. His artistic genius rebelled against merely repeating himself, and it was necessary to explore new modes. The exploration did not begin in 1600; in the prose speeches of Shylock, in the apt handling of 'low life' in the Histories, he had moved outside the classical and continental influences. But it is in *Julius Caesar* that he shows his genius as an innovator in language on a massive scale, and achieves consistently the verse which is so distinctly his.

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[1]As has been shown by Halecki (*The Limits and Divisions of European History*) and others, the distinction between the medieval and the modern worlds is rather arbitrary; there was a profound continuity as well as violent change.

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The new development in style can be described largely in terms of recurrence to the spoken idiom. Even in his earliest plays he had indeed shown an easy ability in (what had come hard to Marlowe) engaging his characters in conversation as contrasted with oratorical displays. But the conversation he drew on up to *Twelfth Night* was largely the courtly, learned conversation of those who learnt to speak a cultured language from Petrarch, Boccaccio, Lyly. He turned then to the conversation of the people at a time when the popular language was what it still is, in parts of Scotland and Ireland—the tangible medium for expressing ingrained and widespread beliefs. It was Shakespeare's good fortune that these popular beliefs were a conviction, not of the efficiency of the Tudor monarchy, or of the superiority of the British navy, or of the other glories of the Elizabethan period; what helped him was a belief in the existence of a suprasensible world which had been taken for granted for centuries but whose dramatic suitableness had hardly been suspected even by the writers of the Moralities. Shakespeare's gradual transition from the

> Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise,
> Three-pil'd hyperboles, spruce affectation,
> Figures pedantical

to the 'blanket of the night', and the 'rank sweat of an enseamed bed' is much more than a growth in literary power or an expansion of dramatic talent; it is the full employment, for the first and last time, of the medieval ethos and medieval ethic in order to enrich and diversify the material of tragedy. It has been a commonplace since Arnold's time that Shakespeare lived in a current of fresh and invigorating ideas; we are now in a better position than even Arnold to see that many of the invigorating ideas antedate the Renaissance by centuries. Shakespeare lived at exactly the right time for his genius; earlier, dramatic art was too inchoate; later, the beliefs he drew on (I do not say embraced) began to disintegrate; even while they lasted, they were apparently too complex, too foreign to contemporary taste in the theatre, to be easily subdued to dramatic purposes. We have here another evidence of his power (often noticed, but seldom analysed) to carry over into play-writing the shrewd practical sense which made him a successful businessman. His capacity to draw on everything that suited his genius has the marks of a great administrator, building so much so firmly out of difficult and even refractory material.

The task to which he addressed himself in the great tragedies is immense: to present the most profound phases of human conduct in the most significant manner while appealing to popular taste. To achieve this immense result, he turned not so much to a fuller understanding of the Renaissance mind, but to what his fellow countrymen had been thinking for centuries. He wished to present and elucidate a many-sided situation which includes very different types of persons and motives operating in a world made largely by

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non-human forces.[2] The distinctive Shakespearean structure comes, not so much from the need to compress a series of events within the framework of a play, but rather from a powerful urge to elucidate, and even exhaust, the meaning of the opening situation. For this task only a very complex language, with several levels of intelligibility, is adequate. He puts the emphasis no longer on mellifluence, grace, urbanity; the self-conscious cleverness with words is almost entirely abandoned; he becomes more and more concerned with extracting the maximum meaning from the situation he selects as his dramatic material. The new depth of language comes largely from a new depth of interest and insight into human character and conduct, rather than from strictly literary interests.

It will be suggested later that this new approach gives him a new kind of dramatic structure and an increased clarity in evaluating human conduct. But we must approach the larger issues through his language. It is a language too varied, too adaptable to each new dramatic difficulty, to be compressed within any one formula. But for convenience, we may define it as a way of combining words which maintains constantly before our attention the vast complexities of a given situation, drawing out its implications by the strictly dramatic method of setting the various items of the situation in constant interaction. The mature Shakespeare idiom is, among other things, a continuously effective device for exploring and contemplating a given human scene; it is a language which (in a manner closely similar to Hebrew) transcends the great limitation of language, that it must present things in succession. It resembles Wagner's device of thematic harmony which is not so much a succession of chords, but melody laid on melody, each recalling an important theme or interest; it resembles musical harmony in the full use it makes of the suggestive overtones which words set up when combined in certain ways. By means of such language, he is able to indicate the variety and complexity of the *subjective* world (of thoughts, feelings, wishes), of the *objective* world (of physical laws and forces not made by man), and of a *metaphysical* world (of non-human but personal forces) which he makes neither too ethereal nor too palpable.

It may be well to consider first some of the fairly definable qualities of the later style. For example, he achieves a new poetic power in dealing with commonplace things—a matter of capital importance to any poet, but especially to the popular dramatist. He is able to speak of the ordinary necessary things without letting the verse become too slack. As *The Cocktail Party* shows, casual matter easily generates limpness of language; Shakespeare had experienced the same difficulty, and his parallel to Eliot's weakness would be Canterbury's discourse on the Salic Law. Equally, he avoids the opposite danger of bolstering the commonplace by an extraneous poeticality. Apart from purely literary considerations,

[2]We must do what we can, in the middle of the twentieth century, to keep in mind the distinction, so important to the medieval mind, between *non-human* and *inhuman*.

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it is easier on the actor, more effective on the stage, to indicate the lateness of the hour by:

> The deep of night is crept upon our talk,
> And nature must obey necessity,

than to call the early morning:

> an hour before the worshipp'd sun
> Peer'd forth the golden window of the east.

Milton developed in the opposite direction from Shakespeare. In the Nativity Hymn we find a young artist taking hints not only from the Metaphysicals (who themselves bear many interesting resemblances to the mature Shakespeare), but also from the religious plays and the medieval hymns. The 'silly shepherds chatting in a rustic row' are reminiscent of the Nativity plays; the descriptive details ('winter wild' and 'meanly wrapt') are drawn not from the Bible but from such sources as the Ambrosian hymns and the Franciscan tradition of the 'Christian Crib'. Even though he may never have read the *Jesu Redemptor Omnium* (Ambrosian 6th century), Milton is in many places very close to the spirit of the fifth stanza:

> Hunc astra, tellus, aequora,
> Hunc omne quod caelo subest,
> Salutis Auctorem novae
> Novo salutat cantico.

Whatever our final estimate of the Nativity Hymn may be, it is hard to resist the impression that *Paradise Lost* might have gained by the presence of the 'shepherds chatting in a row', in something of the same manner as the *Commedia* gained by the presence of the 'old tailor peering at the eye of his needle'. (Inferno, Canto XV; *cf.* Eliot: *Selected Essays*, p. 243.) It would be impossible for any of the characters in *Paradise Lost* to 'chat'; for by this time Milton was convinced that all things pertaining to the Deity should be written of in the grand manner, and since he wishes to relate everything to God, he never relaxes the grand manner; to preserve dignity and stateliness, the phrasing, rhythm and grammar are constantly kept distinct from the spoken language. To some extent, *Paradise Lost* marks the beginning of a new attitude towards Religion, a new belief about its place in human life. The conviction that only lofty things and thoughts should be admitted into the stately halls of the poem is not far removed from the later belief that Religion should be reserved for lofty occasions; the poetic exclusion of all that is mean and common is not far removed from the later confining of Religion within the walls of Churches.[3] The medieval

[3]As a parallel to the increasing confinement of Religion to a few activities, we have the common attitude to-day towards culture as something which is sought in concert halls and art galleries and is quite distinct from one's business and ordinary amusements.

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belief—still strong in Shakespeare's time and still very evident in Bunyan—was that Religion was co-terminous with life and conduct; a man did not need to think religiously all the time, but there was nothing which could rightly be excluded intentionally from Religion. In as far as a man thought religiously, he saw everything in relation to the fundamental, abiding realities he believed in.

The pervasiveness of that medieval habit of mind in Shakespeare can be seen in Brutus' phrase about the night which links the immediate situation with much larger issues; the phrase is both good poetry and good conversation; it is not a merely picturesque way of saying that the staff members are in need of sleep after so late a session. For the habitual courtesy and delicate tact of Brutus (which Shakespeare keeps us constantly aware of, in order to point up the contrast with the crassness of the other conspirators, with the demagogic Antony and the politic Octavius) are here reinforced by being set in immediate relation to the forces within and without man which are beyond man's control. The vastness of the night ('vaulty, voluminous, stupendous', one might quote) creeps on them. In *deep* and *creeps* he finds the two words which so perfectly suggest the quiet, irresistible forces which bring on darkness and which impose on man the need for rest. The *nature* which must obey necessity is equally the nature of the human microcosm and of the vast 'frame of things'—there is something which gives the law to both. Literary criticism may not only take note of the special fitness of the wording, but may also try to define the type of interest in men and in the world from which the wording comes; that interest is not merely poetic, it is philosophical or religious—like the interest found in almost every page of More, it supposes a view of the world as a whole and a view of ultimate human purposes.

It is with the same easeful command of huge issues that a little earlier (in the famous 'tide in the affairs of men' image) Brutus mentions the operating of the other powers than human will in human conduct while avoiding any suggestion of fatalism or determinism. The whole passage supposes a view (a dramatic view, not necessarily a personal conviction) that man shapes his fate but only within limits determined by forces larger than man. Shakespeare is here making effective dramatic use of the medieval belief in the mystery of the co-operation of limited human will with the Infinite Will. The unobtrusive dignity in speaking of common things (the need for sleep, the movement of the tides) is really the obverse of another power—to be 'at home', to feel at ease, in the midst of tremendous things. The dignified courtesy of Brutus contains many more overtones than the polished refinement of, say, Pater, for it is kept so constantly in contact with a whole philosohy or religion—Stoicism seen through the eyes of Christian tradition. The value of the popular beliefs lay not so much in points of religious detail they helped to furnish (*e.g.*, the sympathetic portrait of the Friar in *Romeo and Juliet*), but rather in offering opportunities for greater significance, intenser interest, even in the stories of pagan Rome or early Scotland.

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It is in *Macbeth* that he makes the fullest use of the supra-sensible world; the growth evident in this play compared with *Romeo* may be indicated by contrasting two invocations to night. Juliet's great speech (III, ii) represents the full use by Shakespeare of the distinctly Renaissance influences; for all its poignant urgency and perfect placing, for all the artistic care and dramatic experience evident in it, it has not the immediacy, the power to focus our attention on the turmoil within a human heart we find in the incantation of Macbeth. Juliet's speech is rather conventionally poetic in the manner of *Venus and Adonis*, *i.e.*, poetic in an established mode of poetry, not poetic in a manner springing inevitably from the dramatic situation; it carries us not to the larger world of Brutus' *tide* and *night*, but to the literary world of Renaissance classical mythology—a beautiful but a weaker world. Already in 1593, or 4, Shakespeare's genius was supple enough to make great poetry out of Renaissance conventions and classical allusions. But Juliet's speech does not take us into the profound understanding of human experience as Macbeth's does, for it is much less aware of the large frame of things within which human conduct is conditioned. The 'light thickening', the 'good things drooping', the 'black agents rousing to their preys', are, like Brutus' *tide* and *deep*, the concrete forms of agencies transcending the human world; they are more than symbols, for in a quasi-sacramental manner they help to produce the effects they symbolize. They suggest an attempt by Macbeth to identify himself with the inexorable, destructive forces of nature, being cast in the form of an incantation to them to accomplish the murder for him. The passage is Shakespeare's very concrete manner of showing us that Macbeth forgets the 'deepest consequences to which the instruments of darkness may betray us'. What we have here is much subtler, and much more human, than the Faustus story, in either its medieval or its Marlovian form, of the man who sells his soul to the devil. Yet the Macbeth passage could not have been written except in and for a society which believed in the existence of evil, sightless substances, to whom man could ally himself. It is a necessary part of Shakespeare's effect to leave the substances in their sightlessness; however repulsive or mysterious they may be, they are conceived as being as much part of nature as the deep of night or the tides of ocean. If we find a sinister suggestiveness in the crow, it is largely because we accept the bloody, invisible hand of night as being as real as the crow. He uses similar beliefs in Lady Macbeth's incantation to the murdering ministers to suck gall from her breasts—the close juxtaposition makes the ministers as dramatically real as her body. It is by this constant interaction between the tangible and the intangible that Shakespeare makes the whole scheme of 'metaphysical aid' both vivid and acceptable on the one hand, and profoundly mysterious on the other.

However we may rationalize our enjoyment of *Macbeth*, we simply accept the 'aid', the 'instruments', the 'ministers' as actual forces in the play while we are seeing the play, or reading it with adequate attention. Yet Shakespeare is too percipient an artist (one

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might say, he is too good a medieval theologian) to make the unseen forces vivid in the manner of Milton who makes his God and angels live by merely anthropomorphizing them. It would defeat Shakespeare's purpose if the forces outside man were either explicitly defined or simply omitted. Sophocles' *Ajax* has an interesting resemblance to *Macbeth*, but it has less meaning—at least, for us to-day—because Ajax' madness is directly the work of Athena who, however divinized, remains one of the characters in the play. The Greeks had not, what the medieval beliefs presented to Shakespeare, a profound conviction of the *mysteriousness* (the peculiar combination of intangible remoteness with immediate presence) of the non-human forces at work in human conduct. By the time of Milton (and certainly by the time of Pope) the sense of mysteriousness had largely disappeared from the English mentality. Bunyan demonstrates that it still lived in the middle of the 17th century, though it was no longer so available to the literary artist. When it was recaptured to some extent by Blake and Wordsworth, it had become rather too fuzzy to be introduced into poetry in a completely satisfactory manner. The coins of the intellectual currency supposed in Blake's *Songs* or *The Prelude* are not so clearly stamped, nor their objective value so distinctly felt, as is the system of beliefs supposed in *Macbeth* or the *Pilgrim's Progress*. At the same time, by a paradox rather puzzling to the modern mind, neither Blake nor Wordsworth is as intensely aware of the presence of mystery in the universe as either Shakespeare or Bunyan. The work of Shakespeare and Bunyan has the same artistic tact as the longer parables of the New Testament—they stop at exactly the right point where the invisible, mysterious world is vividly felt but its mysteriousness is not obliterated. Neither Shakespeare nor Bunyan, nor anyone drawing on the authentic medieval tradition, could have been betrayed, in the full maturity of his genius, into the kind of battle-music we find in *Paradise Lost*, Book VI. Milton is here Homeric in the worst sense; his description of the angelic conflict is the work of a great poet unsuccessfully trying to fuse the battle language of the *Iliad* with Christian material which, by its presuppositions, is incapable of being confined within so entirely human a frame of reference. Milton never managed to avail himself, as Dante and Shakespeare did, of the unique quality of Christianity—its unique combination of belief in profound mystery with the rigorous probing of exact reason found in *e.g.*, Augustine and Aquinas.

These two powers of Shakespeare's mature idiom (to deal familiarly with immense and mysterious things, and significantly with little things) are accompanied by others of great practical importance to the dramatist, especially the use of significant detail, economy of statement, the maintenance of a conversational tone (even in the most intense speeches and most private soliloquies), and the presentation of human experience in the process of being made. It would require great space to deal adequately with these items, but we may note in a general way how closely Shakespeare's

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mature idiom resembles that of Hebrew.

The Hebrew mind came into English literature particularly through the Psalms, although the same general characteristics are found in the songs of Isaiah, the laments of Jeremiah and the epistles of Paul. These pieces represent a mentality and a method of expression very different from anything we have learnt from the Greeks and the Romans; they imply very different concepts of orderliness and clarity from Plato's dialogues or the Roman orations—so different that even after careful application we may feel that these works are disorderly and confused.[4] To put it concretely for the moment, Voltaire would not have found Shakespeare so barbaric, readers in the 1920's would not have been so puzzled by the apparent disorderliness of *The Waste Land*, if they had been more familiar with the Psalms. Understood in even an approximately right way, the Psalms can, apart from their intrinsic value, provide a very practical introduction to the mature Shakespeare.

For one thing, the Psalms are sacred songs which derive from a body of doctrine as closely and as perfectly integrated as the dramatic structure of *Lear*. Economy of statement is possible in both, because it consists in referring the statement to a large whole of experience supposed in the reader's mind; this 'whole' is built up in Hebraic literature by previous religious training, in Shakespeare, remotely by the medieval and Renaissance schooling, and immediately by the preceding part of the play. It is one of the snaffles on a modern playwright in (*Murder in the Cathedral* as much as in *The Apple Cart*) that there is to-day no such integrated whole to which the writer can conveniently refer. And, correspondingly, it is one of Shakespeare's triumphs that his language, even to-day, keeps alive, as much as it needs, the medieval-Renaissance mentality he supposes. Such statements as: 'This pine is bark'd that overtopped them all' or, 'By the waters of Babylon, there we sat and wept when we remembered Zion', are structural sentences, because their full understanding requires, and refers the mind to, a grasp of many large issues not mentioned at all—'overtopped' and 'Babylon' set in vibration many intellectual and emotional overtones; they suppose a number of concepts and attitudes with which the reader is expected to be familiar. 'Overtopped' holds in a kind of colloidal suspension all the previous impressions of Antony's eminence and power; 'Babylon' suggests the whole world of idolatry, debauchery and naked power.

Besides, the Psalms, like many of the great soliloquies, are as far removed as clarity will allow from the appearance of 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'; they do not offer an account of what has happened to the mind on a previous occasion, now deliberately

[4]The feeling that Hebrew literature is somewhat alien to the western mind is, of course, very old. Peter Damian (11th century) and even the great scriptural scholar, Jerome (4th century) felt there was something gritty and uncouth about the Hebrew prophets. *Cf.* Waddell: *The Wandering Scholars*. Introd. p. XVI.

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reflected on; rather they show the mind actually undergoing, living its experiences, not merely examining them after the event. The Psalms, like a good play, are constantly in the present tense. The language, instead of disentangling and classifying experiences (in the manner of Plato's dialogues or Aristotle's *Analytics*) shows the items of experience as jostling and affecting each other in a truly living process. It is precisely for this reason that the Psalms, like the soliloquies, can appear disorderly and confused (and it may be suspected that much of Shakespeare's blank verse is more puzzling than critics have in general been willing to admit, or perhaps, been able to recognize). The Psalms may offend our sense of neatness because they leap so suddenly from idea to idea, from one interest or attitude to another, they fuse contrasting and even conflicting ideas. In this way, they resemble great dramatic verse which requires the combination of careful artistry with apparent spontaneity. If even so sensible a critic as Johnson found himself rather baffled in one way by *Lear* ('the language of Shakespeare is very licentious', 'he commonly confounds the characters of ages') and in another way by *Antony* ('the events . . . are produced without any art of connection or care of disposition'), it was largely by the presence in both plays of an Hebraic (or 'Gothic') quality which the Neo-Classic mind found too wild, too sudden in its many quick changes of front, too full of vigorous, mettlesome life to cope with easily. The very reasonableness and decorum of the 18th century made it difficult (not impossible, as Johnson demonstrates) to get really inside the torrential passion of *Othello* or the wild tumult of *Lear*. Shakespeare's Hebraic strain seemed as incongruous in a play as did gargoyles in 'a temple of the God'. Donne's poetic instinct which thought of Christ's Church as a wife who is most pleasing to her husband when embraced by most men, Shakespeare's dramatic instinct which turned a captain's heart into the bellows and the fan to cool a gipsy's lust, are closely allied to the Hebrew instinct which thinks of God in one place as a gentle shepherd and in another as a mighty man rousing himself from sleep, roaring under the influence of wine, and hastening to smite his enemies in the hinder parts. The 18th century good sense and decorum felt embarrassed in the presence of such lusty language as this. Yet it is on account of such language that we reckon Donne a poet of major importance (even when we hesitate to call him a major poet); it is this language that gives Shakespeare's verse its constantly dramatic quality, that is, its power to make experience actual and present by maintaining the appearance of speech arising spontaneously from the immediate situation.

It is also by acquaintance with such language that we can arrive at a workable conception of dramatic suspense. That Shakespeare intended to arouse suspense is evident, I think, to anyone who has seen any of the tragedies well acted; that it is easy to misconceive suspense, is evident from many school editions of Shakespeare. We may understand the idea of suspense better in relation to an essential function of dramatic language—to create and

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maintain the illusion that, at any one moment in the play, the rest of the action is yet in the future, determinable but not determined, and hence not known. Great dramatic language keeps this illusion so effectively alive that we accept the illusion after learning for the twentieth time what does happen. Such an illusion supposes a basic power in the mind to transfer ourselves back to a point of time when subsequent events are still determinable by human will. This in turn makes two other suppositions—that the will is free and that the intellect is curious. Drama supposes free will because its inherent interest assumes that, while human beings *do* act in one particular way, they *could* act in others. Curiosity may be of two forms—the mere desire to learn what does, as a matter of fact, happen, or the desire to know something of the how and why of the result. The suspense possible in great drama is very different from what we find in the adventure or detective story; once we know the bare fact of the outcome, we lose interest. True dramatic suspense is the interested contemplation of free will acting in conjunction with non-human forces; it is very distinct from waiting on the results of a football pool. Suspense in this sense supposes an eagerness to see explicitly what is already implied by the end of the introductory section.[5] The artistic pleasure lies largely in seeing the final outcome as proceeding, with a certain inevitability yet by the free action of human will, from the opening situation. Knowledge of the outcome, instead of blunting, actually sharpens suspense of this kind because it gives us ampler opportunities to contemplate human will in action.

At the same time, the suspense is keener, dramatically more effective, in proportion to the variety of the factors involved in the outcome (provided we can grasp them with sufficient clarity). The value of such variety is largely the reason for introducing into plays a host of forces outside and independent of man. The sources of interest to be found in the non-human world are used, rather crudely in *Dr. Faustus*, with a pious but somewhat uncertain hand in *Comus*, with too much anthropomorphism in *Paradise Lost*; they find their fullest expression in *Macbeth*, which is in several ways the best treatise in the language on demonology. And it is particularly the presence of these non-human forces that make it impossible to feel at any time that we have exhausted the meaning of a given tragedy, that we have *fully* contemplated the human situation and action it presents. There are so many and so complex factors at work in a Shakespearean tragedy that not even the most observant reading can perceive all the interactions which the language sets up among the factors. The critic is in no better position to say, 'Now we know all there is to be known about *Hamlet*', than the psychologist is to say, 'Now we know all there is to be known about

[5]Here again we must remember Shakespeare's unwillingness to work according to a fixed formula; the introduction in *Hamlet* is not complete till the end of the lengthy First Act; in *Antony*, on the other hand, we are given all we need in the first sixty lines—a condensation of consummate artistry.

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the emotions'; in either case have the possible combinations been exhausted. Dramatic suspense is then the pleasurable contemplation of free will acting in the present (with the future considered as yet determinable) and conditioned by a number of non-human forces.[6]

The elements which make such enjoyment of tragedy possible are the very things which are found in the matter and manner of the Psalms. For the Psalms are cast in the form of sacred dialogues or monologues, with a constantly conversational quality; they work from a pre-accepted body of teaching; they express, or rather enact, religious experience in the very process of being lived. Whatever else *might* have occured, it was largely the reading of the Psalms which bred the habits of mind in both Shakespeare and his audience which, in their turn, helped to make the great tragedies possible, and make them popular. Shakespeare had, of course, no monopoly on the influences coming from the Liturgy. But none of his contemporaries seem to have been as aware as he of the special fruitfulness and interest of these influences for dramatic purposes. We can see here the importance of the *written* language, for it was the prescribed prayers which kept the medieval beliefs in defined form. The printed word of the *Book of Common Prayer* made the doctrines and attitudes of the Middle Ages more available to the people in Elizabeth's time than they had been under Henry VIII.

The great popular success of the *Book* was due not only to the power and cadence of its language, but also to the clear, stimulating manner in which it defined habits of mind common in England for centuries. It is particularly in the *Book* that we can realize the original meaning of the word *Reformation*; what was aimed at, both by the divines and by the politicians whose financial interests were being served, was not the creation of a new religion, but a certain purging of the old. If the Reformation succeeded (as in certain ways it triumphantly did), it was largely because it maintained so much of the older religion, and thus became a vehicle for transmitting so many attitudes and interests characteristic of the Middle Ages. What was lost through the Reformation need not concern us here, since Shakespeare died long before the losses had much effect on literature.

We may recur here to a point mentioned earlier—that

[6]There is an interesting, and rewarding, parallel between this multiple contemplation necessary in reading Shakespeare and the medieval notion of meditation and of the Beatific Vision. It is not accidental that Benedict, the founder of western monasticism, prescribed the devout recital of the Psalms (and other liturgical prayers) as the *opus Dei* of the monks and as the true source of meditation. The Beatific Vision was thought of as the highest form of meditation —the unending, joyful contemplation of the inexhaustible beauty of God. As almost all the early monks were laymen, and the non-religious laity took an active part in the Liturgy, liturgical influences must have had more than a mere external effect on popular art in the 16th century.

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Shakespeare's development cannot be discussed in merely literary or dramatic terms. If we are (even in outline) to examine the literary influence of the *Book*, it should not be by simply noting similarities of diction and rhythm between the *Book* and other writings; we must take into account the interests, points of view, mental emphases, which the *Book* kept alive and influential. It is, I think, very significant that the Bible had not the same desirable influence on Milton as it had on Shakespeare; for Milton, on the whole, accepted the Puritan estimate of the Bible (contrasting very strongly with the Anglican) as an all-sufficient document needing no guide or interpreter. This estimate separated the Bible from the more congenial, more 'human' influences of the liturgical language and helped to concentrate attention very much on the Old Testament which, according to the Bible itself, is the covenant of fear and permeated by a spirit distinct from that of the New. Shakespeare eschews the rather jejune, the constantly severe, the unrelievedly serious qualities of Hebrew poetry on which the later Milton fastened with such tenacity.[7] The isolation of the Bible from its liturgical setting had unfortunate effects on popular habits of mind and on the writing of poetry. The Psalms, the 'sayings' of Isaiah, could not teach the people as much by themselves as they could in union with the clarification and orderliness contributed by the Greek and Latin minds who formed the early Liturgy. Shakespeare himself furnishes evidence that the Hebraic influence need not be all on the side of grandiloquence and formal dignity. For example:

> All is but toys . . .
> The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
> Is left this vault to brag of,

is definitely not Miltonic in movement or vocabulary, yet it is drawn fairly directly from the Hebrew: 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity', 'the wicked of the earth shall all drink the dregs of the winecup of the Lord'.

The Liturgy performed another very useful service in keeping alive a manageable, balanced form of Platonism,[8] which is the philosophical basis for the employment of significant detail. For example, there is something very closely allied to Platonism in the concept of a sacrament, and at no time has symbolism reached the

[7]It is worth noting that *e.g.*, the verb to laugh, in the Old Testament always means *to mock, to deride*; humour is simply absent from the Old, and occurs in only one or two places in the New—in Luke, the least Hebraic of the biblical writers.

[8]The Liturgy as we have it today, in either the Roman or the Anglican ritual, was formed in its essentials when Plato was felt to be the philosopher who, of all the pagans, came nearest to the Christian mind. By the 13th century, when Aristotelianism exercised its powerful influence on theological thought, the Liturgy was too stabilized to feel that influence to any important degree.

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practical importance or profound meaning it did in the sacramental system. A sacrament is some common object, tangible or sensible (in Macbeth's sense), signifying some great divine effect which it helps to produce; one can describe Shakespeare's imagery in almost the same language. For metaphor, in the hands of a master, Shakespeare or Isaiah, has a quasi-sacramental power to 'enact' what it represents. Othello's 'icy current and compulsive course' by its special union of cold, determined ('icy') purpose with the heat of intense passion ('violent pace'), of steady, poised movement ('keeps due on') with wild destructiveness ('wide revenge') does not merely describe jealousy, it enacts, it makes the passion of jealousy live in our own minds as we read or listen. It would be a gross over-simplification to say that Shakespeare learned to write imagery of this dramatic precision and poetic vigour from the Liturgy, since such imagery cannot be *learnt* from any source. But it is no exaggeration to say that some of the habits of mind supposed in such imagery were developed and kept alive and flexibly available through the Liturgy; for the language here supposes such habits as the power to see commonplace things as the symbols of large issues. and the habit of cross-fertilizing the definite and the indefinite, the tangible and the intangible. The latter process is evident in:

> O then we bring forth weeds
> When our quick minds lie still, and our ills told us
> Is as our earing.

Here the visible or tangible (the fallow field which is finally ploughed) is used to clarify the more intangible corruption of mind and character which 'idleness' and 'dotage' bring about, and the intangible gives meaning and value to the tangible. Such cross-fertilizing is the common process in Shakespeare's mature imagery—not only is the remote made present, or the vague clarified, but the commonplace is dignified, made more significant. That such a way of looking at the physical world is habitual with Shakespeare is evident from the very abundance of his metaphors, and from the fact that this language is not reserved for special effects but may occur, with artistic rightness, in quiet or casual phrases. Banquo's 'husbandry in heaven' and 'night's candles' are not extraneous, imposed, or contrived poeticality; they spring from the truly Platonic habit of seeing the temporal in relation to the eternal, the material in relation to the immaterial. Shakespeare did indeed make more abundant and more effective use of the Platonic frame of mind than any one else; and the work of Shelley clearly indicates that Platonism may discourage the mind from establishing clear contact with physical reality. But the Platonism of the Liturgy is an admirable fusing of the physical with the unseen world; many of the Collects show the same power as the great Shepherd Psalm (XXIII) to move with the greatest ease in both the temporal and the eternal, the visible and the invisible worlds; the palpable and the impalpable parts of human experience are made to reinforce each other. By

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the time of writing *Macbeth*, this power had become habitual with Shakespeare; he was then like the really great singer or pianist who is able to produce exactly the effect he desires because his vocal apparatus or his hands have been so long and so perfectly trained that the desired habit is brought into play as soon as it is felt to be right for the occasion. The Liturgy was eminently suited to set up such habits and keep them flexibly available.

There is little evidence that the same kind of influence could be exerted by Platonism in what we may call its unadulterated or purely Renaissance forms (*e.g.*, in Spenser's sonnets, in the Mutability Cantos, in Lorenzo's speeches in the Fifth Act of *The Merchant*). The more learned or aristocratic Platonism was literary in the restrictive sense of the word, too occupied with merely literary effects. For the aristocrat or scholar got his Platonism from Plato, the common Elizabethan got it from the Liturgy; there were dangers in separating Plato from the liturgical language parallel to those incurred in separating the Bible from the Liturgy—the danger of robbing it of its richly human significance, of its power to direct the mind to the things of greatest importance and intensest interest to human beings, namely the inner workings of the mind and the dealings of man with an unseen world. It was part of Shakespeare's perspicacity as an artist and competitive business man to realize sources of interest, of appeal, of significance which his contemporaries so largely neglected. Similarly, it was part of Shakespeare's culture as a European, as a legatee of the Middle Ages, that he drew hints and materials from the mind of the people who in their speech and their prayers preserved so much of the traditional beliefs and interests built up by European civilization.

Platonism helped in other ways. It tended to concentrate attention on the inner life of the mind, on the inner springs of conduct—it facilitated the transition from *Titus Andronicus* to *Hamlet* through *Romeo and Juliet*. Looked at in this way, the bare Elizabethan stage is not the result of mere ignorance or of a merely crude economy; the bare stage has something of the symbolism of the bare cell of the monk—it is what it is partly because of a widespread belief that the physical apparatus of life is its least important part. No Elizabethan, indeed, would have thought of the stage in quite these terms; but it is only by some such terms that we can to-day put explicitly what was implicit in the Elizabethan mind. Even from the purely practical point of view, the simple stage gives the dramatist greater opportunities to focus attention on the things which really make the life of dramatic art.

Similarly, the popular brand of Platonism coming from the Liturgy was a safeguard for the Elizabethans against a form of interest which became strong in the 19th century and is very marked in the popularity of the newspaper to-day—the interest in the unconnected, the unexplained fact. The Platonic mind could hardly give much attention to amorphous information—and it is characteristic of 16th century education that it made so little effort to teach amorphous information. It was largely this that encouraged Shakespeare

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to present as forms of really popular art the most profound psychological studies we have in English; it enabled him to treat the facts of history with considerable freedom, seeing in the historical sources not so much a mere account of things that were once done, but rather a parable or paradigm of what human beings continue to do. If he achieved such popular and such lasting success, it was mainly because he drew from novelists and historians the inner, human meaning of their stories, and presented on the stage as penetrating an explanation of the events as the limits of a play allow. We may see here how shallow it is to say that Shakespeare does something because it was a convention of his time—for there usually was a good reason for the convention and almost always a very good reason why he followed the convention. The anachronisms and other historical inaccuracies arise partly from contemporary conventions, but from conventions which had their roots in a mentality formed largely by the Liturgy.

Platonism also implied a fairly constant consciousness of a wide scheme of things in relation to which an immediate situation was to be understood. We can perceive this consciousness in Dante for, as Eliot has pointed out, the philosophical system is an integral part of the *Commedia* and is really never lost sight of. What this meant in practice for Shakespeare was particularly that he succeeded in the tragedies in avoiding any impression of giving a few hours in the private lives of a few individuals—Shakespeare is conscious, as is the Bible, of the continuing presence of the human race as a whole. The Porter in *Macbeth*, the Gravediggers in *Hamlet* are the representatives of the millions of human beings for whom there was no room in the already crowded scenes of the plays. Enobarbus and even the Clown in *Antony* keep the reader in mind of the larger world of humanity of which Antony and Cleopatra are themselves so largely unconscious—they 'place' the action in relation to a large scheme which cannot be explicitly presented in the play. We might here again draw on the parallel between great dramatic and great administrative talent—for the great administrator, in making any one decision, sees its ramifications and implications in relation to a hundred other things; the great playwright does not 'forget Goschen'. The Platonic mind widens and enriches the human meaning of the plays.

Each of the tragedies is final in its own way, because each carries to a summation and intensity never since surpassed an element in the contemporary mentality. Shakespeare's work is greater than Shakespeare suspected, for even he can hardly have realized that the whole Renaissance movement in drama could not go any further than he carried it. There were indeed *other* things to be done; he does not make the later work of Jonson or the French tragedians superfluous. But there was no one to develop the Renaissance interests in ambition, or pride, or jealousy, as Shakespeare developed it by the application to drama of the contemporary religious influences.

It is here, I think, that we may find a partial answer to the problem which Eliot proposes as insoluble:

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> 'We must simply admit that here Shakespeare tackled a problem which proved too much for him. Why he attempted it at all is an insoluble puzzle; under compulsion of what experience he attempted to express the inexpressibly horrible, we cannot ever know'. (*Selected Essays, Hamlet,* p. 146.)

It would in the nature of things be too much to expect even from Shakespeare the capacity to develop a new art form without any hesitations and with immediate success. The great tragedies from *Hamlet* depend on the natural inclination of the great genius to see the full possibilities open to him—as Napoleon hammered a new kind of state out of the ruins of the old French monarchy by perceiving and directing latent potencies in the French people which had lain fallow in the previous régime. What Shakespeare produced in the later plays comes from an inventiveness, a power of innovation (both in writing plays and in getting the desired effects from his actors), an inventiveness which has not been sufficiently examined because of the emphasis falling so heavily on Shakespeare's borrowings.[9] The great plays are really as fresh a *genre* of drama as the Moralities, and as different from their predecessors as the Moralities were from the strictly liturgical plays. It is, however, harder to recognize them as a new *genre* because, unlike the early Moralities, they were too great to remain a norm for subsequent artists and become part of a school or movement. Shakespeare, like Michelangelo, had no one to carry on the art form he developed. Drama did not die in 1610, but the Jacobean drama is not a continuation of Shakespeare.

While it is true that Shakespeare was too great, too resourceful an artist to confine himself within any one formula, it is, I think, correct to think of the great tragedies as belonging to a *genre* unique in the application of a masterly ease to a unique range and depth of material. It was, I have suggested, part of Shakespeare's genius to have recognized the kind of material which so perfectly suited his special talents. But it would be a misunderstanding even of Shakespeare's genius to suppose that the invention and development of his own art form, the achievement of that masterly ease, could come without any fumbling or botching. It may even be suggested that *Troilus and Cressida, All's Well* and *Measure for Measure* indicate that his grip on his own art form was not in firm and flexible control till *Othello*. In any case we must recognize that no one before or since addressed himself to the gigantic task of presenting human experience in so profound, so searching, and in so appealing a manner. His task is comparable to the greatest tasks undertaken by the greatest statesmen—full of difficulties and (what must be

[9]With the information now at our disposal it is impossible to be dogmatic, but one may suspect that, in getting the boy to handle rightly so delicately shaded a part as Ophelia, Shakespeare must have encountered the same difficulties as Wagner in switching his singers from the Italian *bel canto* to the appropriate *operndichtung*.

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reckoned with in the case of artistic as well as of administrative talent) full of possible dead-ends. While it may be, as Eliot indicates, that he wrote *Hamlet* under the compulsion of some personal experience, it is perhaps more fruitful for literary criticism to think that he wrote it under the compulsion of his expanding genius; we may go some distance towards explaining the place of the play in the Shakespearean canon by supposing it to be the first large scale endeavour to infuse a new vitality into dramatic art by incorporating into it the religious beliefs of the Elizabethan folk.

As I shall endeavour to show later, the 'inexpressibly horrible' occurs not only in *Hamlet* but also in *Macbeth* (in the inner corruption of mind and heart produced by the lust for power). And while Shakespeare was too good a moralist and psychologist to imagine that that horror can be fully explained or expressed, he did succeed in making it an eminently practicable theme for a great tragedy.

L. A. CORMICAN.

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THE NOVEL AS DRAMATIC POEM (V):

'WOMEN IN LOVE' (I)

I HAVE not always thought *Women in Love* one of the most striking works of creative originality that fiction has to show—I have not always thought it successful enough to make such a judgment reasonable. When, at the time of the novel's first appearance, I read Middleton Murry's review of it in the *Nation and Athenaeum* I saw no reason for protesting. Even ten years later, when I came on the pages of *Son of Woman* that deal with *Women in Love* I was not moved to protest that Murry was ignoring all those immediately impressive aspects of the book which should make it at first reading an unquestionable and astonishing work of genius. If then I adduce Murry for disagreement, that is by way, not of exhibiting superiority, but of making a convenient approach to the peculiar difficulties that Lawrence presents to literary criticism.

For Lawrence is, I have to contend, a case for literary criticism, in a way that Murry would seem to deny. Murry himself, of course, is a literary critic in *Son of Woman*; for the purposes of that study he has to be one. But the interest he takes there in Lawrence's writings is of a special kind that leads him to treat them as documentation; as evidence of Lawrence's personal case and inner history. He concerns himself in particular with the difficulties resulting for Lawrence throughout his life from the relation established with him in childhood by his mother. And it is true that Lawrence is for us a man and a life as well as a writer, and true that the writings yield the kind of personal and psychological interest that Murry specializes in. To elicit it safely, however, one must be a better critic than Murry permits himself to be, and one will not then be able to ignore the fact that Lawrence is an artist, and a great one. It is this aspect of Lawrence that I am concerned with.

Murry denies that it exists. 'To charge him with lack of form', he says, 'or of any other of the qualities that are supposed to be necessary to art, is to be guilty of irrelevance. Art was not his aim' (*Son of Woman*, p. 173). It is true that the Art of Flaubert was not his aim; but it is not for nothing that he writes, 'Art speech is the only speech'. There are distinctions to be made within his *oeuvre*, but he had, it is necessary to insist, the aim and the kind of genius of the greatest kind of creative artist. His own emotional and personal problems may have tormented him, in the way Murry describes, all his life, and made him a difficult husband and an 'impossible' man. But anyone who needs convincing that Murry's perverse, tortured and hate-possessed Lawrence is not the whole truth, or the most important part of it, need only read *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, or *Apropos of Lady*

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Chatterley's Lover, or even the *Fantasia*. Here we have unmistakably the serenely triumphant reign of intelligence—intelligence that, in creative understanding, transcends the personal plight that feeds it. It is the intelligence of a great creative artist, whose imaginative achievements *are*, at the same time, achievements of intelligence.

They are not always, everyone can see, achieved enough to be wholly impersonal works of art, containing within themselves the reason why they are so and not otherwise, and leading one, for their significance, not back to the author, but into oneself and out into the world. *Look, we have come through!*, the sequence of poems, is fairly treated by Murry as registering in a directly personal way the graph of Lawrence's experience, in his early life with Frieda, of the problem of marital relations—for him a peculiarly difficult one. *St. Mawr*, on the other hand, seems to me to be, in its poised imaginative range, as impersonal as the serene and lucid essay, *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*. But there are creative works of Lawrence's that are not so easily classified. The novels succeeding *Women in Love* are neither simply autobiographical in the way of *Look, we have come through!*, nor have they the complete and impersonal significance of highly organized works of art. They were written at great speed in a tentative and self-exploratory spirit, and something like a direct involvement of the author is so evident in them on so large a scale as to give much colour, here, to Middleton Murry's kind of documentary reduction.

Women in Love, however, is another matter. Lawrence worked hard at it over a period of years; and these years belonged to the phase of his life when he still believed that he would before long win recognition as the great contemporary novelist. There were new things to be done in fiction, conceived as a wholly serious art, and it was for his peculiar genius to do them. No artist could be more consciously and pertinaciously preoccupied with problems of method, technique and form. His genius moved him to creation, and his was the most profoundly original kind of genius. *Women in Love* is the work of the writer who, in undertaking *The Rainbow*, had explained that another *Sons and Lovers* must not be looked for from him, but that the original treatment of life he was now proposing required a formidable originality of method and style.[1] It is the work of the novelist whose intentness on his art as he conceives it leads him to say:[2]

> 'Tell Arnold Bennett that all rules of construction hold good only for novels that are copies of other novels. A book which is not a copy of other books has its own construction, and what he calls faults, he being an old imitator, is what I call characteristics'.

Nevertheless, after forming a higher opinion of *Women in Love* at each re-reading in the course of nearly thirty years, I still do not question that the book *has* faults. The most obvious and the

[1] *Letters*, p. 172 and p. 197.
[2] *Letters*, p. 295.

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worst, it seems to me, is that exemplified in the passages quoted by Murry from the chapter called 'Excurse'. Here is one of them:

> 'She knew there was no leaving him, the darkness held them both and contained them, it was not to be surpassed. Besides, she had a full mystic knowledge of his suave loins of darkness, dark-clad and suave, and in this knowledge there was some of the inevitability and the beauty of fate, fate which one asks for, which one accepts in full.
>
> He sat still like an Egyptian Pharaoh, driving the car. He felt as if he were seated in immemorial potency, like the great carven statues of real Egypt, as real and as fulfilled with subtle strength, as these are, with a vague inscrutable smile on their lips. He knew what it was to have the strange and magical current of force in his back and loins, and down his legs, force so perfect that it stayed him immobile, and left his face subtly, mindlessly smiling. He knew what it was to be awake and potent in that other basic mind, the deepest physical control, magical, mystical, a force in darkness, like electricity'.

I see here a fault of which I could find worse examples in *Women in Love*, though it is a fault that I do not now see as bulking so large in the book as I used to see it. It seems to me that in these places Lawrence betrays by an insistent and over-emphatic explicitness, running at times to something one can only call jargon, that he is uncertain—uncertain of the value of what he offers; uncertain whether he really holds it—whether a valid communication has really been defined and conveyed in terms of his creative art ('Art speech is the only speech').

For Murry, however, these places which I see as marginal in their unsatisfactoriness represent the centre of significance. On the passage just quoted he comments: 'This is the reassertion of his masculinity, of which he is always dreaming'. That is, Murry treats *Women in Love* as if it were a document of essentially the same order as *Look, we have come through!* 'To the working out of this personal argument in the imaginary consummation of Birkin and Ursula', he says, 'all else is really subsidiary in the novel'.

This is just not true. By way of beginning to show that it obviously isn't one might point to the wealth of vivid dramatic creation for which the book should be found remarkable at first reading—the astonishing variety and force of the enacted life. It should not be too difficult to see that these memorable scenes, episodes and images are not random. Even a reader who is still far from having grasped the full thematic development must be aware by the time he reaches the end of the book that it contains a presentation of twentieth-century England—of modern civilization—so firsthand and searching in its comprehensiveness as to be beyond the powers of any other novelist he knows of.

The novelist who achieves this is one whose treatment of the individual life, for him the inevitable focus of preoccupation, is incomparably inward and subtle—the individual life in its essential

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and inescapable relations with others. 'No human being can develop save through the polarized connection with other beings'. This might perhaps seem to be a truism: in nothing does Lawrence's genius show itself more than in the originality and profundity with which he explores and demonstrates the truth the proposition sums up. The same essay, *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, contains—to choose one of many eligible sentences—what might have served as an epigraph for *Women in Love*:

> 'The tortures of psychic starvation which civilized people proceed to suffer, once they have solved the bread-and-butter problem of alimentation, will not bear thought'.

Positively, the preoccupations of the novel are put here:

> 'The amazingly difficult and vital business of human relationship has been almost laughably underestimated in our epoch. All this nonsense about love and unselfishness more crude and repugnant than savage fetish-worship. Love is a thing to be *learned*, through centuries of patient effort. It is a difficult, complex maintenance of individual integrity throughout the incalculable processes of interhuman polarity'.

Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious is obviously, and very impressively, a work of poised and sober intelligence. Together with the companion treatise, *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, which in its 'fantasia' mode has equal serenity and poise, it is closely related to *Women in Love*, that novel which has so often been supposed to represent a repudiation of mind in an extreme of abandonment to frenzied sexuality and the Dark Gods. That Lawrence can write a convincing expository treatise on his themes will not, perhaps, be held against him as a novelist.

That he *is* a novelist it should be impossible to doubt after reading the first few pages of *Women in Love*. The opening, though it can hardly be alleged to have the personal-documentary vibration that announces the significant for Murry, proclaims the master. The reader, wholly engaged at once, cannot doubt that this novel is *about* something, as few novels are:

> 'Ursula and Gudrun Brangwen sat one morning in the window-bay of their father's house in Beldover, working and talking. Ursula was stitching a piece of brightly-coloured embroidery and Gudrun was drawing upon a board which she held on her knee. They were mostly silent, talking as their thoughts strayed through their minds.
>
> "Ursula", said Gudrun, "don't you *really want* to get married?" Ursula laid her embroidery in her lap and looked up. Her face was calm and considerate.
>
> "I don't know", she replied. "It depends how you mean". Gudrun was slightly taken aback. She watched her sister for some moments.
>
> "Well", she said ironically, "it usually means one thing!

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But don't you think anyhow, you'd be—" she darkened slightly—"in a better position than you are in now".

A shadow came over Ursula's face.

"I might", she said. "But I'm not sure".

Again Gudrun paused, slightly irritated. She wanted to be quite definite.

"You don't think one needs the *experience* of having been married?" she asked.

"Do you think it need *be* an experience?" replied Ursula.

"Bound to be, in some way or other", said Gudrun, coolly. "Possibly undesirable, but bound to be an experience of some sort".

"Not really", said Ursula. "More likely to be the end of experience".

Gudrun sat very still, to attend to this.

"Of course", she said, "there's *that* to consider".

As the two girls continue their conversation the novel is decisively launched. There they are, educated, intelligent and conscious, no longer belonging to the working-class into which they were born, or to any class or context that can give life bearings or direction, or in which (say) marriage has its significant and unquestionable place. And yet, if not marriage—what? 'The sisters found themselves confronted by a void, a terrifying chasm, as if they had looked over the edge'.

> 'They worked on in silence for some time, Gudrun's cheek was flushed with repressed emotion. She resented its having been called into being.
>
> "Shall we go out and look at that wedding?" she asked at length, in a voice that was too casual.
>
> "Yes", cried Ursula, too eagerly, throwing aside her sewing and leaping up, as if to escape something, thus betraying the tension of the situation and causing a friction of dislike to go over Gudrun's nerves'.

The way to the church is through representative English scenes, the 'amorphous ugliness of a small colliery town in the Midlands', and, evoked with all Lawrence's peculiar genius, the spoilt and blackened countryside. The wedding is a conventional one, very different from any in which we can imagine the Brangwen girls being involved—that of course is a large part of its dramatic and poetic point. At the church we are introduced to most of the other main characters of the novel: the Crich family one of whom is being married; Birkin; and Hermione Roddice, a Baronet's daughter and 'a woman of the new school, full of intellectuality, and heavy, nerve-worn with consciousness', having, for all her external overbearing assurance, a void within her that she feels Birkin alone can fill. It doesn't matter in the least that Hermione is supposed to be modelled on a well-known Georgian intellectual hostess; what does matter is that she at once becomes a convincing presence and that

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she has her essential part in the organized significance of the novel.

The problem of discussing *Women in Love* is that the organization in so rich and close. From the moment the Brangwen girls begin their conversation about marriage, the dramatic poem unfolds—or builds up—with an astonishing fertility of life; life of a kind, one would have thought, that should at once have won recognition for Lawrence's creative genius as that of a great *novelist*. ('The greatest imaginative novelist of our time', wrote Mr. E. M. Forster in an obituary notice; and I have always honoured him for it: such an estimate—or at any rate the conviction that could express it so—was not common in those days.) This life, so much of which commands the imagination at the first encounter, is all significant life; not a scene, episode, image or touch but forwards the organized development of the themes. To discuss this development point by point as the dramatic action advances would take a volume. One can only hope to do some sufficiently representative illustrating that will convey the nature of the themes and of the whole organization.

I will consider the treatment of Gerald Crich's case. There we have peculiarly well exemplified the way in which, in Lawrence's art, the diagnosis of the malady of the individual psyche can become that of the malady of a civilization. Moreover, to consider *Women in Love* as it focusses on Gerald, as so much of it does, is to expose with great force the fallacy of Murry's approach. 'To the working out of this personal argument in the imaginary consummation of Birkin and Ursula, all else is really subsidiary in the novel': no one who had read the novel disinterestedly as a novel—as the dramatic poem that it so patently is—could think that; and for such a reader it must seem perversely arbitrary to assert that the movement of the action towards Gerald's death draws its significance and its power from is relation to a major and central drama of Birkin and Ursula.

We see Gerald first through Gudrun's eyes ('her interest was piqued'), at the wedding in the first chapter, a blond and handsome young Englishman of the ruling class. A reception follows at Shortlands, the Crich home, where, deputizing for his ailing father, he takes command, with a poised and easy adequacy. Yet in the same chapter we are made aware that he is more interesting than the ostensible type suggests. We gather, and the effect is to establish a sense of some strain or self-distrust beneath the confident surface, that when a boy he has accidentally killed his brother. This effect is reinforced by the conversation with which Gerald and Birkin bring the chapter to a close—the conversation about the enactment of marriage by capture that has so oddly qualified the conventionality of the wedding. We have here an admirable small-scale illustration of Lawrence's power of introducing direct discussion of his themes into dialogue that remains convincingly dramatic in every respect. Gerald disapproves of the unconventional episode. Birkin, who is obviously very near to a self-dramatization of Lawrence, replies:

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' "I think it was perfect good form in Laura to bolt from Lupton to the church door. It was almost a masterpiece in good form. It's the hardest thing in the world to act spontaneously on one's impulse—and it's the only really gentlemanly thing to do—provided you're fit to do it".

"You don't expect me to take you seriously, do you?" asked Gerald.

"Yes, Gerald, you're one of the very few people I do expect that of."

"Then I'm afraid I can't come up to your expectations here, at any rate. You think people should just do as they like."

"I think they always do. But I should like them to like the purely individual thing in themselves, which makes them act in singleness. And they only like to do the collective thing."

"And I," said Gerald grimly, "shouldn't like to be in a world of people who acted individually and spontaneously, as you call it. We should have everybody cutting everybody else's throat in five minutes." . . .

"It's a nasty view of things, Gerald," said Birkin, "and no wonder you are afraid of yourself and your own unhappiness."

"How am I afraid of myself?" said Gerald; "and I don't think I am unhappy."

"You seem to have a lurking desire to have your gizzard slit, and imagine every man has his knife up his sleeve for you", Birkin said.

"How do you make that out?" said Gerald.

"From you", said Birkin.

There was a pause of strange enmity between the two men, that was very near to love'.

But still more has been done to qualify our sense of Gerald's perfectly poised 'strong man' normality by Birkin's encounter, earlier in the chapter, with Gerald's mother. Her disturbing queerness is evoked with that power of Lawrence's which sometimes reminds us of Dickens, though it is a power that serves a profound psychological insight, and conveys characteristically the vibration of inner significances. Mrs. Crich, in her outdoor things, comes noiselessly into the room and makes straight for Birkin:

' "I don't know half the people here", she said, in her low voice. Her son-in-law moved uneasily away.

"And you don't like strangers?" laughed Birkin. "I myself can never see why one should take account of people, just because they happen to be in the room with one: why *should* I know they are there?"

"Why indeed, why indeed!" said Mrs. Crich, in her low, tense voice. "Except that they *are* there. *I* don't know people whom I find in the house. The children introduce them to me—'Mother, this is Mr. So-and-so'. I am no further. What has Mr. So-and-so to do with his own name?—and what have I to do with either him or his name?"

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She looked up at Birkin. She startled him. He was flattered too that she came to talk to him, for she took hardly any notice of anybody. He looked down at her tense clear face, with its heavy features, but he was afraid to look into her heavy-seeing blue eyes. He noticed instead how her hair looped in slack, slovenly strands over her rather beautiful ears, which were not quite clean. Neither was her neck perfectly clean. Even in that he seemed to belong to her, rather than to the rest of the company; though, he thought to himself, he was always well washed, at any rate at the neck and ears.

He smiled faintly, thinking of these things. Yet he was tense, feeling that he and the elderly, estranged woman were conferring together like traitors, like enemies within the camp of the other people. He resembled a deer, that throws one ear back upon the trail behind, and one ear forward, to know what is ahead.

"People don't really matter", he said, rather unwilling to continue.

The mother looked up at him with sudden, dark interrogation, as if doubting his sincerity.

"How do you mean, *matter?*" she asked sharply.

"Not many people are anything at all", he answered, forced to go deeper than he wanted to. "They jingle and giggle. It would be much better if they were just wiped out. Essentially, they don't exist, they aren't there".

She watched him steadily while he spoke.

"But we don't imagine them", she said sharply.

"There's nothing to imagine, that's why they don't exist".

"Well", she said, "I would hardly go as far as that. There they are, whether they exist or no. It doesn't rest with me to decide on their existence. I only know that I can't be expected to take count of them all. You can't expect me to know them, just because they happen to be there. As far as *I* go, they might as well not be there".

"Exactly", he replied.

"Mightn't they?" she asked again.

"Just as well", he repeated. And there was a little pause.

"Except that they *are* there, and that's a nuisance", she said. "There are my sons-in-law", she went on, in a sort of monologue. "Now Laura's got married, there's another. And I really don't know John from James yet. They come up to me and call me mother. I know what they will say—'How are you, mother?' I ought so say, 'I am not your mother, in any sense'. But what is the use? There they are. I have had children of my own. I suppose I know them from another woman's children".

"One would suppose so", he said.

She looked at him, somewhat surprised, forgetting perhaps that she was talking to him. And she lost her thread.

She looked round the room, vaguely. Birkin could not guess what she was looking for, nor what she was thinking. Evidently she noticed her sons.

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"Are my children all there?" she asked him abruptly.
He laughed, startled, afraid, perhaps.
"I scarcely know them, except Gerald", he replied.
"Gerald!" she exclaimed. "He's the most wanting of them all. You'd never think it, to look at him now, would you?" '

What lies behind Mrs. Crich's queerness we learn later in the chapter (XVII) called 'The Industrial Magnate'. The account there of what has gone wrong between her and her husband, and consequently to both of them, is a profound study of individual psyches. As their son Gerald's case assumes its relation to the past and becomes for us a significant part of the family history we realize that, in the rendering of this, we have seen at the same time—and seen as revealed by a profoundly diagnostic insight—the large movement of civilization.

The surveying sweep, the history and the exposition of 'The Industrial Magnate', which comes half-way through the book, bring to full explicitness what has been conveyed in the complex course of the preceding action by dramatic and poetic means—all the resources of a great poet-novelist. That we have in *Women in Love* astonishing imaginative power should be granted at once by any reader, so largely compact is the book of effects that work an irresistible spell immediately, even when their full significance is very far from being taken. What is manifested in the organization that commands such a variety of resource and method with such seeming ease, so that they work together to serve a complex significance, is a remarkable intellectual grasp: the novelist's imaginative grasp is at the same time that.

To suggest the range and flexibility of Lawrence's art one may set over against 'The Industrial Magnate' the earlier chapter (IX), 'Coal-dust', in which Gerald forces his terror-stricken Arab mare to stand while the colliery-train passing the level-crossing, does its worst with wheels, brakes, buffers, chains and whistle. The whole thing is rendered with shattering immediacy; with Ursula and Gudrun we watch, tortured by hideous noise and clenched in violent protest, while the rider compels the frantic mare back against herself and into the assaulting terrors. The significance of the episode needs no eliciting or developing by anything in the nature of comment from the novelist. The little drama—the image of Gerald, 'a glistening and half-smiling look on his face', as he 'bites down' on the mare, and strikes his spurs into her bleeding sides—crystallizes our sense of Gerald and gives it a new sharp edge. It picks up and brings to a focus of significance a multitude of intimations that have been conveyed to us earlier in different ways. We now realize the energy of will in Gerald as something more cruelly and dangerously ruthless than, for instance, it appears as Ursula and Gudrun discuss it in chapter IV, 'The Diver'. Walking by Willey Water they see in the distance Shortlands, 'Dorothy Wordsworth and Jane Austen' in its charm, but, says Ursula, being ruthlessly modernized inside by Gerald:

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' "Certainly, he's got go," said Gudrun. "In fact I've never seen a man who showed signs of so much. The unfortunate thing is, where does his *go* go to, what becomes of it?"

"Oh I know," said Ursula. "It goes in applying the latest appliances".'

Where Gerald's "go" goes to ultimately is self-destruction: the novel shows us the process, in all its aspects, with inexorable convincingness. To analyse step by step the process of art by which this is done would take inordinate space. And it is unnecessary; for once the reader has grasped the general nature of Gerald's case he should find that the subtleties of the art tell sufficiently at a first current reading to make the development of the themes, and the ways in which they are organized, clear. The best commentator on Gerald's case is Lawrence himself; the discussion of will and 'ideas' in *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* is illuminatingly relevant. To say this may perhaps be to invite the suspicion that Lawrence, for a poet-novelist (as I have called him) is dangerously a theorist. But the intelligence that makes his generalized exposition of his theme so lucid and convincing is precisely that which qualified him to be a great novelist. He experiences, perceives and understands, and the strength of his thought lies in its sensitive adequacy to the perceptions, insights and realizations that it orders and states in epitomizing abstraction.

It is because he has the genius of a great creative writer that he has been capable of this thinking; and that he has done it, achieving the appropriate expression in discursive form, has certainly its consequences for his art. But this is not to say that in *Women in Love* (for example) he has written a novel to illustrate a theory. That would be to suggest that an abstract system of schematic simplifications has been imposed on life. But his discursive thought itself is governed by a distrust of abstractions that, positively, is a rare power of maintaining a living fidelity to the concrete; and the mind that has done this thinking brings to the artist's creative work a sharpened perception of the significance and a strengthened grasp of it—brings the ability to achieve such an organization as that of *Women in Love*.

Here, then, is a passage of *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* immediately relevant to Gerald's case:

'True, we must all develop into mental consciousness. But mental consciousness is not a goal; it is a cul-de-sac. It provides us only with endless *appliances* which we can use for the all-too-difficult business of coming to our spontaneous-creative fullness of being. It provides us with means to adjust ourselves to the external universe. It gives us further means for subduing the external, materio-mechanical universe to our great end of creative life. And it gives us plain indications of how to avoid falling into automatism, hints for the *applying* of the will, the loosening of false, automatic fixations, the brave adherence to a profound soul-impulse. This is the use of the mind—a great indicator and instrument. The mind as author and director of life is anathema'.

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—But that is what it has become in Gerald; hence the destructiveness of his 'go', as the following passage from the same essay explains:

> 'The mind is the dead end of life. But it has all the mechanical force of the non-vital universe. It is a great dynamo of super-mechanical force. Given the *will* as accomplice, it can even arrogate its machine-motions and automatizations over the whole of life, till every tree becomes a clipped tea-pot and every man a useful mechanism. So we see the brain, like a great dynamo and accumulator, accumulating *mechanical* force and presuming to apply this mechanical force-control to the living unconscious, subjecting everything spontaneous to certain machine-principles called ideals or ideas.
>
> 'And the human will assists in this humiliating and sterilizing process. We don't know what the human will is. But we do know that it is a certain faculty belonging to every living organism; the faculty for self-determination'.

The significance of these propositions reveals its full force and scope in the life and death of Gerald. A certain verbal identity may have been noticed between what Ursula says of his 'go' and what Lawrence says of 'mental consciousness'. Gerald's 'go', says Ursula, goes 'in applying the latest appliances': 'Mental consciousness', says Lawrence, 'provides us only with endless *appliances* which we can use for the all-too-difficult business of coming to our spontaneous-creative fullness of being'. But mind, with its accomplice, will, does not, in Gerald, serve; it has established itself in the saddle, and its 'appliances' work the psyche from above. He suffers an attendant disadvantage, the lack of something that will and idea cannot supply: the sense of a meaning in life. 'I wish you'd tell me something that *did* matter', he says suddenly in one of his intimate talks with Birkin. But he has his 'go': he can cultivate a sense of purposive activity in 'applying the latest appliances'.

In Gerald, in fact, we see related the malady of the individual psyche and the process of industrial civilization. Gerald, when *Women in Love* begins, has virtually taken over the direction of the mines from his father. What lies behind this we are shown in the chapter, 'The Industrial Magnate'. Thomas Crich has been an idealist all his life:

> 'He had been so constant to his lights, so constant to charity, and to his love for his neighbour. Perhaps he had loved his neighbour even better than himself—which is going one further than the commandment. Always, this flame had burned in his heart, sustaining him through everything, the welfare of the people. He was a large employer of labour, he was a great mine-owner. And he had never lost this from his heart, that in Christ he was one with his workmen. Nay, he had felt inferior to them, as if they through poverty and labour were nearer to God than he. He had always the unacknowledged belief that it was his

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workmen, the miners, who held in their hands the means of salvation. To move nearer to God, he must move towards his miners, his life must gravitate towards theirs. They were, unconsciously, his idol, his God made manifest. In them he worshipped the highest, the great sympathetic, mindless Godhead of humanity'.

The domination of this ideal is something that Mrs. Crich's very being repudiates. The relation between her husband and her recalls in its way the episode of Gerald and the mare; for in Christiana Crich we see 'spontaneous-creative' life cruelly constrained and violated by a will-enforced idea:

'And all the while his wife had opposed him like one of the great demons of hell. Strange, like a bird of prey, with the fascinating beauty and abstraction of a hawk, she had beat against the bars of his philanthropy, and like a hawk in a cage, she had sunk into silence. By force of circumstance, because all the world combined to make the cage unbreakable, he had been too strong for her, he had kept her prisoner. And because she was his prisoner, his passion for her had always remained keen as death. He had always loved her, loved her with intensity. Within the cage, she was denied nothing, she was given all licence.

'But she had gone almost mad. Of wild and overweening temper, she could not bear the humiliation of her husband's soft, half-appealing kindness to everybody'.

But it is in the logic of the development of son out of father that Thomas Crich's ideal receives its critical exposure. Gerald as a boy had 'hated remorselessly the circumstances of his own life, so much that he never really saw Beldover and the colliery valley'. He had 'turned his face entirely away from the blackened mining region that stretched away on the right hand of Shortlands, he turned entirely to the country and the woods beyond Willey Water'. Yet, after a young-manhood spent in unsatisfying quest for adventure, he had 'discovered a real adventure at last in the coal-mines'. Asked by his father to help in the firm, he has settled down to finding the meaning of life in them. The meaning they actually represent for him, however, differs radically, not only from his father's ideal, but from what, when challenged, he says it is. Here is a conversation between him and Birkin as they travel together to London in the train (chapter V).

' "Can't you see," said Birkin, "that to help my neighbour to eat is no more than eating myself. 'I eat, thou eatest, he eats, we eat, you eat, they eat'—and what then? Why should every man decline the whole verb. First person singular is enough for me".

"You've got to start with material things", said Gerald. Which statement Birkin ignored.

"And we've got to live for *something*, we're not just cattle that

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can graze and have done with it", said Gerald.

"Tell me", said Birkin. "What do you live for?"

Gerald's face went baffled.

"What do I live for?" he repeated. "I suppose I live to work, to produce something, in so far as I am a purposive being. Apart from that, I live because I am living".

"And what's your work? Getting so many more thousands of tons of coal out of the earth every day. And when we've got all the coal we want, and all the plush furniture, and pianofortes, and the rabbits are all stewed and eaten, and we're all warm and our bellies are filled and we're listening to the young lady performing on the pianoforte—what then? What then, when you've made a real fair start with your material things?"

Gerald sat laughing at the words and the mocking humour of the other man. But he was cogitating too.

"We haven't got there yet", he replied. "A good many people are still waiting for the rabbit and the fire to cook it".

"So while you get the coal I must chase the rabbit?" said Birkin mocking at Gerald.

"Something like that", said Gerald.

Birkin watched him narrowly. He saw the perfect, good-humoured callousness, even strange, glistening malice, in Gerald, glistening through the plausible ethics of productivity.'

The 'callousness' and the 'glistening malice' betray the deep anti-human drive in which Gerald has found the solution of his personal problem—in so far as he *has* found a solution. The 'plausible ethics of productivity' is not only an irrelevance in the face of this problem ("What do you live for?" is the way of putting it here): it represents, by the criterion that Lawrence's creative genius compels us to apply, a refusal of responsibility—of self-responsibility, or responsibility towards life. But so equally does Thomas Crich's idealism:

> 'Perhaps he had loved his neighbour even better than himself—which is going one further than the commandment'.

Against this we may put Birkin's:

> 'Can't you see that to help my neighbour to eat is no more than to eat myself?'

Thomas Crich attributes to eating as done by others a significance that it hasn't for himself as eater, for he attributes to the having, in charity, helped others to eat, a significance that can dispose for him of the question, 'What do you live for?' The fallacy, the idealism, is not only a sentimental self-indulgence and an evasion of responsibility; we are made to see it as positively inimical to life, which, victim of the malign inescapable logic, suffers a cruel disaster in Christiana Crich.

But there is a wider-reaching defeat of life, one that involves the miners themselves. Thomas Crich's benevolent idealism could

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not establish permanent peace in the mines. Moved by 'the last impulses of the last religious passion left on earth, the passion for equality'—and 'how disentangle the passion for equality from the passion of cupidity, when begins the fight for equality of possession?' —the miners take the field:

> 'The idea flew through them: "All men are equal on earth", and they would carry the idea to its material fulfilment. After all, is it not the teaching of Christ? And what is an idea, if not the germ of action in the material world. "All men are equal in spirit, they are all the sons of God. Whence then this obvious *disquality*?" It was a religious creed pushed to its material conclusion. Thomas Crich at least had no answer'.

That word 'disquality' is no mere ill-bred wantonness on Lawrence's part, pointlessly substituted for 'inequality'. It registers an essential insistence. The truth it insists on is one that no great novelist, I imagine, could have thought of denying. Lawrence insists on it in *Women in Love* because it is peculiarly important for the diagnostic presentment of industrial civilization and of the political ideas prevailing in the society to which his characters belong. The challenging word, when it occurs in the chapter called 'The Industrial Magnate', picks up certain immediately relevant earlier passages in the novel. One of them is a discussion that takes place at the house-party in chapter VII ('Breadalby')—a chapter in which the dramatic power, the penetration and the flexibility of a great novelist's art are wonderfully exemplified. Since the discussion suggests peculiarly well the ways in which the different aspects of Lawrence's themes are related—how the personal question about marrying with which the novel opens is related to the examination of social and political ideas and to the industrial revolution effected by Gerald—a quotation of some length will perhaps be justified:

> 'The great social idea, said Sir Joshua, was the *social* equality of man. No, said Gerald, the idea was, that every man was fit for his own little bit of a task—let him do that, and then please himself. The unifying principle was the work in hand. Only work, the business of production, held men together. It was mechanical, but then society *was* a mechanism. Apart from work they were isolated, free to do as they liked.
>
> "Oh!" cried Gudrun. "Then we shan't have names any more—we shall be like the Germans, nothing but Herr Obermeister and Herr Untermeister. I can imagine it—'I am Mrs. Colliery-Manager Crich—I am Mrs. Member of Parliament Roddice. I am Miss Art-Teacher Brangwen'. Very pretty that".
>
> "Things would work very much better, Miss Art-Teacher Brangwen", said Gerald.
>
> "What things, Mr. Colliery-Manager Crich? The relations between you and me, *par example*?"
>
> "Yes, for example", cried the Italian. "That which is between men and women—!"
>
> "That is non-social", said Birkin, sarcastically.

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"Exactly", said Gerald. "Between me and a woman, the social question does not enter. It is my own affair".

"A ten-pound note on it", said Birkin.

"You don't admit that a woman is a social being?" asked Ursula of Gerald.

"She is both", said Gerald. "She is a social being, as far as society is concerned. But for her own private self, she is a free agent, it is her own affair, what she does".

"But won't it be rather difficult to arrange the two halves?" asked Ursula.

"Oh no", replied Gerald. "They arrange themselves naturally—we see it now, everywhere".

"Don't you laugh so pleasantly till you're out of the wood", said Birkin.

Gerald knitted his brow in momentary irritation.

"Was I laughing?" he said.

"*If*", said Hermione at last, "we could only realize, that in the *spirit* we are all one, all equal in the spirit, all brothers there—the rest wouldn't matter, there would be no more of this carping and envy and this struggle for power, which destroys, only destroys".

This speech was received in silence, and almost immediately the party rose from the table. But when the others had gone, Birkin turned round in bitter declamation, saying:

"It is just the opposite, just the contrary, Hermione. We are all different and unequal in spirit—it is only the *social* differences that are based on accidental material conditions. We are all abstractly or mathematically equal, if you like. Every man has hunger and thirst, two eyes, one nose and two legs. We're all the same in point of number. But spiritually, there is pure difference and neither equality nor inequality counts. It is upon these two bits of knowledge that you must found a state. Your democracy is an absolute lie—your brotherhood of man is a pure falsity, if you apply it further than the mathematical abstraction. We all drank milk first, we all eat bread and meat, we all want to ride in motor-cars—therein lies the beginning and the end of the brotherhood of man. But no equality.

"But I, myself, who am myself, what have I to do with equality with any other man or woman? In the spirit, I am as separate as one star is from another, as different in quality and quantity. Establish a state on *that*. One man isn't any better than another, not because they are equal but because they are intrinsically *other*, that there is no term of comparison. The minute you begin to compare, one man is seen to be far better than another, all the inequality you can imagine is there by nature. I want every man to have his share in the world's goods, so that I am rid of his importunity, so that I can tell him: 'Now you've got what you want—you've got your fair share of the world's gear. Now, you one-mouthed fool, mind yourself and don't obstruct me'."

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Birkin here enunciates the truth registered in the term 'disquality', and does so in a context that explains the insistence. No great novelist can be a Benthamite; for him the fact that we can be said to be 'all abstractly and mathematically equal' has little to do with his interest in mankind. It is a fact that Lawrence is concerned with by way of protest and warning; his study of the individual psyche has led him to the diagnosis of a civilization in which the idealism he condemns (it amounts, he points out, to the same thing as materialism) has become a deadly enemy to life. The truth that 'disquality' insists on has, he knows, to be insisted on in the modern world—and he was writing *Women in Love* thirty years ago, when Lenin's revolution was contemporary news ('Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive'). In *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* he insists on it characteristically when, desiderating a 'science of the creative unconscious', he adds that such a science will need 'a super-scientific grace'; for

> 'mark, the first naked unicellular organism is an *individual*. It is a specific individual, not a mathematical unit, like a unit of force'.

Thomas Crich's idealism, denying the essential truth, and traitorous to life, gets him

> 'trapped between two half-truths and broken. He wanted to be a pure Christian, one and equal with all men. He even wanted to give away all he had, to the poor. Yet he was a great promoter of industry, and he knew perfectly that he must keep his goods and keep his authority. This was as divine a necessity to him as the need to give away all he possessed—more divine, even, since this was the necessity he acted upon. Yet because he did *not* act on the other ideal, it dominated him. He wanted to be a father of loving kindness and sacrificial benevolence. The colliers shouted to him about his thousands a year. They would not be deceived'.

The new conditions call for a new kind of master, and as the son takes over we see the issue of Thomas Crich's idealism in the triumph of mechanism. For Gerald the 'whole Christian attitude of love and self-sacrifice is old hat': he acts consistently and without misgiving on the half-truth that even his father had *acted* on. Confident of grasping reality, 'he knows that position and authority are the right thing in the world':

> 'They were the right thing, for the simple reason that they were functionally necessary. They were not the be-all and the end-all. It was like being part of a machine. He himself happened to be a controlling part, the masses of men were the parts variously controlled'.

The logic, when the truth of 'disquality' is left out, is irresistible. His father's dilemma is resolved; and as Gerald goes ahead

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with his 'life-work . . ., to extend over the earth great and perfect system in which the will of man ran smooth and unthwarted, timeless, a Godhead in process', we see in the good-humoured commonsense of his part in the discussion quoted above a ruthless inhuman force, and a terrifying reality of the modern world. In some moods, the account of the process may very well strike us as something like the essential human history of the decades since *Women in Love* was written. The supreme end that commands Gerald is the efficiency of the 'great social productive machine': 'let it produce a sufficiency of everything, let every man be given a rational portion, . . . and then, provision made, let the devil supervene, let every man look after his own amusements and appetites, so long as he interfered with nobody'. The beneficent-sounding end entails, ironically, the conception in which the father's dilemma is resolved: 'the pure instrumentality of mankind'. This, of course, for Lawrence is a destructive blasphemy; and the novel gives us a vivid glimpse of the consequences for the lives of the miners, who hate Gerald, but nevertheless accept what they 'really want': 'the first great step in undoing, the substitution of the mechanical principle for the organic . . . the subordination of every organic unit to the great mechanical purpose'.

Then we have the focus again on the individual psyche. In Gerald himself we see life as the victim of the triumph of mechanism —the usurping dominance of idea and will. It was the sense of an inner lack that drove him to find meaning and purpose in this triumphant activity ('he was a pure and exalted activity'), and the outcome of it is a more terrible void:

> 'But now he had succeeded—he had finally succeeded. And once or twice lately, when he was alone in the evening and had nothing to do, he had suddenly stood up in terror, not knowing what he was. And he went to the mirror and looked long and closely at his own face, at his own eyes, seeking for something. He was afraid, in mortal dry fear, but he knew not what of. He looked at his own face. There it was, shapely and healthy and the same as ever, yet somehow it was not real, it was a mask. He dared not touch it, for fear it should prove to be only a composition mask. His eyes were blue and keen as ever, and as firm in their sockets. Yet he was not sure that they were not blue false bubbles that would burst in a moment and leave clear annihilation. He could see the darkness in them, as if they were only bubbles of darkness. He was afraid that one day he would break down and be a purely meaningless babble lapping round a darkness.
>
> But his will yet held good, he was able to go away and read, and think about things'.

The breakdown actually comes at the death of his father. The long-drawn out process of the death is done with profoundly disturbing power (we are reminded of the death of the mother in

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Sons and Lovers). In chapter XXIV 'Death and Love' (*not* 'Love and Death') we are made to realize the horror of the process for Gerald, as he can less and less disguise from himself the fact of the dependence of his own life, for meaning and the sense of reality in things, on the existence of his father—the father whom he has superseded. We see him turning, more and more compulsively, to Gudrun to save him from the void. The thing is done in dramatic immediacy, through the concrete presence, the evoked action and gesture, and the dramatic utterance; let the reader turn up, for example, pages 341 to 346 (Secker's edition) by way of correcting any impression I may possibly have conveyed of a preponderant reliance on more distant modes—on the expository and historical—in Lawrence's presentment of his themes.

When the father at last dies Gerald takes the desperate plunge into the salvation of 'love'. In a kind of somnambulistic automatism —the whole episode is uncannily evoked—he goes cross-country through the dark to the churchyard, recoils from the smell of the raw earth and the flowers on his father's grave, pushes on with a blind purpose, enters the house that is his goal, and in his muddy boots climbs the stairs to Gudrun's room. Now begins the see-saw battle between them that ends in his death. His 'love' is desperate need and utter dependence, and these make him a deadly oppression to her. Her 'love' for him takes on more and more of malice. The sense of his dependence, and the knowledge that there is no dominance to be achieved that will ensure his safety, makes him hate her.

This drama acts itself out in the high Tyrolese valley where Gerald and Gudrun, with Birkin and Ursula, go for a holiday, and it ends, closing the whole action of the novel, in Gerald's death in the snow. This end in a world of snow, inhumanly cold and white, has its significance. We shall not appreciate fully what this is unless we have recognized the symbolic and emotive function of the primitive carving about which Gerald challenges Birkin so pressingly in the early chapter (VII) called 'Totem'.

F. R. LEAVIS.

(*To be concluded*).

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'WYNNERE and WASTOURE' AND 'THE PARLEMENT OF THE THRE AGES'

I.

IF *Wynnere and Wastoure* was composed in (or about) 1362—as the indications are that it was—it comes at the beginning of what is known as the alliterative 'revival' of the 14th century. The accuracy of speaking thus of a 'revival' may be doubted even from a consideration of this poem alone, although it may well be its earliest surviving example. *Wynnere and Wastoure* does not, any more than any other of the surviving poems of the 14th century, read like the production of a self-conscious archaic revival. So far from reading like an effort, however successful, to reconstitute what by that time was felt to be an archaic mode, the poem has as the core of its interest and the nerve-centre of its technique the pre-occupation of the poet with a contemporary problem of state-craft. That the problem is presented with such masterly ease and robustness in the traditional alliterative mode shows that the poet could have felt no doubt that this mode was still simply the accepted and natural contemporary one both for himself and his audience.

With *Wynnere and Wastoure* we may here associate another West Midland alliterative poem, *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* which possibly preceded it, not merely on the grounds that the two poems happen to have been preserved together on the same unique 15th century MS., but because they have certain striking features in common. Here, in these two poems, but particularly in *Wynnere and Wastoure*, we may observe the tradition in which *Piers Plowman* later belongs. We may at the same time observe in both poems features in common with *Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight*, *Morte Arthure* and other West Midland or North West Midland alliterative poems that have chanced to be preserved.

The fact that these poems of the alliterative 'revival' have survived virtually by accident on unique MSS.—apart from the exceptional case of *Piers Plowman*—should make us hesitate to assume that there had been no such poetry immediately before. Because no such poetry has survived from the period preceding *Wynnere and Wastoure*, itself an accidental survival, we should not too easily assume that no such poetry was then composed.[1]

[1]If it had not been for a few enthusiasts who began the work of collecting the folk ballads, we should not now know of even the existence of the majority of our best ballads The whole vast folk ballad literature might by now have perished almost without a trace.

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What we can say for certain on the evidence of *Wynnere and Wastoure* alone—evidence confirmed by each one of its chronological successors that has survived—is that it is so maturely accomplished that it cannot have been an isolated and fortuitous phenomenon. It implies the existence not only of a whole social order with an individuality of its own, a unique human community at the back of it, but also a tradition of poetic and an audience trained to listen to poetry in that tradition. *Wynnere and Wastoure* is thus itself the evidence that there long had been, and still was, a living and flourishing tradition, in the English of the West Midland region, of such poetry as it is itself. The survival of even one such poem makes nonsense of much of the literary and social history of mediaeval England as we have too easily accepted it. The poem—if we respond to it—is sufficient in itself to force us to revise our conventional notions of the civilization of mediaeval England.

Even when the poet laments (as he does in his prologue) that in these degenerate times the true poets or makers are being supplanted in the favour of the lords by inexperienced and unskilled minstrels, it is evident that he is proudly conscious that he belongs in a succession of poets who for generations were accustomed to command the attention of noble audiences.

> Whylome were lordes in londe that loved in thaire hertis
> To here makers of myrthes, that matirs couthe fynde,
> Wyse wordes with-inn, that writen were never
> Ne redde in no romance that ever renke herde.
> Bot now a childe appon chere, with-owtten chyn wedys,
> That never wroghte thurgh witt three wordes to-gedire,
> Fro he can jangle als a jaye, and japes can telle,
> He schall be levede and lovede and lett of a while
> Wele more than the man that makes hym-selven.
> Bot never the lattere at the laste, when ledys bene knawne,
> Werke witnesse will bere who wirche kane beste.

Further, it is evident from *Wynnere and Wastoure* that a poem in this tradition could be both robustly regional in character and, at the same time, a national poem. The West Midland poet could evidently feel that he might count in the conduct of affairs in the kingdom, that he might expect to be listened to by those who were responsible for the government. He handles with complete confidence, as a poet, a delicate social and economic problem that was the concern and responsibility of the King himself. The implication seems strong, therefore, that the poem was intended to be heeded by the King himself and his counsellors. If it was, then the poet was addressing (in the reign of Edward III) as noble an audience as only a generation later (in the reign of Richard II. principally) Chaucer was addressing so differently. In English it was rather the Chaucerian modes which were, it would seem, the innovations. *Wynnere and Wastoure* and its successors prove at

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least that in Chaucer's England there flourished a whole school of conservative alliterative poetry in the West Midland region, having an individuality of its own quite distinct from that of Chaucer's poetry. They prove that in a region remote from, yet evidently in touch with, the capital there were traditionally rooted poets of great accomplishment—certain of responsive audiences that were different from those of the capital and court. So it was, perhaps, throughout mediaeval Europe.

Piers Plowman, among the successors of *Wynnere and Wastoure*, has equally the character of a national poem, though it hardly implies an audience of the nobles but makes its appeal more broadly to humbler—as well as to instructed—folk. West Midland poems though they are, *Piers Plowman* and *Wynnere and Wastoure* both show their poets' familiarity with London; and there seems every reason to suppose that they were current there. The evidence of the MSS. certainly indicates that *Piers Plowman* was known in widely different parts of the country (and, the MSS. suggest, in widely different forms). It would be unwise, therefore, to assume that *Wynnere and Wastoure* was known only in the West Midlands.

But it is with *Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight* (rather than with *Piers Plowman* which is a special case) that *Wynnere and Wastoure* and *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* take their places as the last English masterpieces of the oral tradition of early Northern European poetry. These poems are not the less characteristically oral poetry because they have been preserved by having been written down. The reason why we have no predecessors of these poems from the 13th century[2] may well be simply that these predecessors were never written down. The assumption that there were no such poems (though it is the established one) seems more unreasonable than the assumption that there were, and that either they were not written down or—if some at least of them were—the MSS. have not survived (as should not be surprising). There is ample evidence not only that in the early communities poetry was oral but that there was a class of men, highly honoured by nobles and kings for their skill and insight, whose whole occupation in life was poetry, and who composed and recited long poems which they did not write down and many of which were never written down.[3]

Our poems are in their very nature oral poetry; and oral poetry, as B. S. Phillpotts (in *Edda and Saga*) and W. P. Ker have stressed, was a social function. Oral poetry could not be enjoyed by the individual alone. He had to join a company if he wished to listen to a poem. The poet himself had to find a company before he could

[2]The existence of the live tradition in the 13th century is witnessed by both *King Horn* (S. Midland, 1225 c.) and *Havelock the Dane* (Northern Midland 1285 c.)

[3]The reader may be referred to Professor Chadwick's note 'On the Heroic Poetry of the Slavonic Peoples' in *The Heroic Age*, and to chapter III, 'Celtic Story-channels and Story-ways' in Loomis's *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance*.

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practise his art by reciting a poem; for the rôle of the poet and the reciter was, at this stage, one. There was thus an immediate relationship—indeed collaboration—between the poet and his audience, as there was between Shakespeare and his theatre audience. There was no need for the literary critical reviews of modern times to perform the function of criticism. The audience could tell the poet directly what they thought of the poem, and he could see for himself the effect of his poem on his audience. Moreover, though our poems were evidently intended to be listened to by nobles and their ladies, everyone in the great hall down through the various 'degrees' there assembled must have had to listen too. Thus one effect of an oral literature was that it 'brought about a general levelling-up of interests and culture'; B. S. Phillpotts makes this point in regard to the Sagas and the audience in an Icelandic homestead. The audience in the great hall could not have been dissimilar in this respect from the audience in an Elizabethan theatre. So, for this reason also, our poems, aristocratic and sophisticated as they are, have a truly national character.

It would be a mistake, moreover, to think of the poet simply as an entertainer and these poems as after-dinner entertainment of however fine a quality. Whether or not recitals of poetry originated as ritual recitals, the conception of the poet as prophet or seer whose insights require to be attended to even by the king himself is very persistent. The poet of *Wynnere and Wastoure*, and indeed also of *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, still regards his rôle as that of the seer. Chaucer would not think of giving himself such airs. That is one of the differences between the conservative alliterative poet and the more modern individual Chaucerian poet. Visions are what the poet as seer appropriately sees. There was no need for the alliterative poet to borrow the dream-vision convention from *Le Roman de la Rose*. One of the Elder Eddas, *Völuspa* (Sibyl's Dream), is a prophetic vision of the end of the world.

The old-fashionedness of the poet of *Wynnere and Wastoure*, his belonging to a dying culture, is perhaps what makes him feel the social problem of his contemporary England so acutely. He inherited two contradictory and incompatible ideals. The ideal of the King as victorious warrior, open-handed giver of gold, he inherited by way of his poetic tradition from the past when the peoples were battling not only for land but for treasure and honour. (It seems a mistake of modern theorists to suppose that peoples have ever been governed by purely economic considerations). But by the 14th century the English people as a whole had settled down to agriculture and trade (merchants were becoming influential). War—specifically the French campaigns of Edward III—was beginning to be regarded by many as a ruinous disturbance. The new settled order required peace, the hard work of all classes and an ideal of thrifty toil. Christianity seemed to sanction this latter ideal, while the Pagan heroic ideal that was still immediate in the poetry sanctioned the former. The scene was further complicated by the sight of the Church not practising what it preached. The old-

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fashioned poet of *Wynnere and Wastoure* (and Langland follows him in this respect) falls back on satire and dramatises his perplexities, at the same time offering his vision as guidance in the old high manner.

II.

Wynnere and Wastoure and *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* are not, of course, what we call plays; they are not intended for dramatic performance by costumed actors; they are recitative (though the professional minstrel—or the poet himself—in rendering them before an audience in a castle hall, or wherever, may be assumed to have dramatically animated the dialogues and monologues in which each poem so largely consists). Nevertheless, each poem in its structure and in several of its characteristic features has unmistakable resemblances to a species of drama. It is as if the poet were describing a dramatic performance or pageant play he is in the act of witnessing and were reproducing dialogues and monologues as these are overheard by him in the act of being spoken by the costumed actors he describes. This performance he represents himself as having luckily (or perhaps magically) been favoured to witness while in a dream or trance. Whether or not the convention of the dream-vision has been borrowed by the alliterative poets, as it was borrowed by Chaucer, from the French—and it seems unlikely that it was—it is here used partly as a device for securing both the detachment of the dramatic pageant and 'the suspension of disbelief' in it. The 'space' within which the imagined events happen is, as it were, distinctly marked off from the audience's every-day environment. A landscape and a pageant of costumed actors, as seen by the poet-spectator in his dream-vision, are sharply visualized in the poem. There is no dream-like or trance-like quality, no vagueness of enchantment, about the spectacle; it is vision—clarity of intense visualization—rather than dream. The central episode of both poems is a *flyting* in which the principal figures of the pageant engage, a satiric word-contest and not—as at first seems possible—a physical combat. This dialogue contest, in the contemporary colloquial English of the West Midland region, is robustly realistic within the formal structure of the whole.

We cannot be satisfied to suppose that the 14th century poet personally invented the well-defined basic structure of such a poem any more than he invented the alliterative mode itself. We are bound to inquire how a structural form so reminiscent of that of some species of drama originated or evolved. That the poet is in fact describing a dramatic pageant he has witnessed—or constructing his poem with the aid of a reminiscence of such a performance—is probably too simple an explanation. There were, of course, contemporary pageants, ceremonies and rituals, both among the courtly folk and the village folk; there were such surviving fragments of ancient ritual drama as the Mummers' Play and the Wooing Play

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(Plough Play), and there were the Miracle Cycles. But it would not be safe to guess, on the existing evidence, that either *Wynnere and Wastoure* or *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* was directly modelled by its poet on any of these contemporary performances, though it might well have been influenced by them. It seems much more likely that the poems and the contemporary dramatic performances belong to traditions that had become independent but had all ultimately (if they could be traced back far enough) a common origin in ancient dramatic ritual. This is not in itself saying very much because it may be that all poetry and all drama has had a common origin in dramatic ritual. There are, however, poems which appear to have retained, in their very structure, more of the features of a ritual origin than others. Our two poems are such that a recollection of what we happen to know about ancient ritual drama seems at once to illuminate their basic structure and to explain why it is so and not otherwise. Our poems no doubt reflect aspects of contemporary pageantry;[4] but that in itself is not sufficient to explain their basic structure. It seems indeed much more likely that our poet (or poets) inherited the basic structure of that kind of poem from the literary tradition in which he was working, whatever modifications he might himself introduce.

F. M. Cornford in *The Origin of Attic Comedy* and B. S. Phillpotts in *The Elder Edda and the Ancient Scandinavian Drama*, each working in apparently divergent fields, have shown how literature—both in its dramatic and non-dramatic variations—evolved originally from the ancient dramatic rituals. Miss Phillpotts' work is more particularly relevant to the study of poems which belong, as *Wynnere and Wastoure* and *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* do, with the alliterative poetry of Northern Europe. By a process of exact critical analysis of the Elder or Poetic Eddas Miss Phillpotts shows that 'the Norwegian Eddic poems bear the unmistakable stamp of dramatic origin . . . Yet these poems are not the remains of folk-drama in the modern sense of the word. Modern folk-drama is a degenerate descendent of the ancient religious drama, whereas these poems are the actual shattered remnants of ancient religious drama'. If one turns from reading Miss Phillpotts' book to examine the structure of *Wyneere and Wastoure* or *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* one cannot fail to be struck with the correspondences between that structure and certain features of the ancient ritual drama as she describes it, correspondences altogether too close to be merely fortuitous.

We will at once observe, on the one hand, the pronouncedly ceremonial or ritualistic aspect of both our poems, and, on the other, their largely dialogic and monologic character; the realistic collo-

[4]The Northern muse of the 9th and 10th centuries loved more than any other to dwell on the stately pageant of court life, and had a real gift for reproducing impressions of colour and form and movement'. (B. S. Phillpotts, *The Elder Edda and the Ancient Scandinavian Drama*).

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quial dialogue develops in both poems within a frame of ballet-like stylized formality. Further, the vividly visualized principal figures undoubtedly resemble, if they are not reminiscent of, the costumed actors—the impersonators of the gods—of ritual drama. Rich costume was no doubt a feature of contemporary courtly ceremonies, themselves in the tradition of ritual kingship; it is also a characteristic feature of the traditional literature that seems to derive originally from the ancient dramatic rituals, as Lord Raglan (in his convincingly reasoned book *The Hero*) does not fail to note: 'It is a feature of all ritual that great importance is attached to the clothes and ornaments worn by the actors . . . Whereas in history there is very seldom any mention of what anyone wore, in the traditional narrative detailed descriptions of costume often occur, and this gives us another reason to believe that traditional narratives are accounts of dramatic ritual'. He instances the fact that 'all those who took part in the May Day festivities, even the King, wore Lincoln green, and this ritual costume appears in the ballads'.

Above all, we will take account, in this connection, of the fact that the central episode of each of our poems is a *flyting*. The *flyting* is, of course, a regular feature of mediaeval poetry. But much earlier, it was a regular feature of the ancient fertility drama in localities as far apart as Scandinavia (as Miss Phillpotts shows) and Greece (as Cornford shows). 'The flyting, the slaying, the love-scene', says Miss Phillpotts, 'are the integral parts of the most widespread drama in the world . . . It represents the contest of the Old and New Year'. Cornford sees the *agon* of an Aristophanic comedy as a literary development from the flyting match that was the regular preliminary of the combat between the two antagonists in the ritual drama. Our two poems may be regarded as corresponding, in this respect, to the *agon* of an Aristophanic comedy. To assume that the *flyting, estrif* or *debat* was imported into mediaeval English alliterative poetry from French or Latin is therefore a large assumption, if one remembers how nearly universal the feature has been and that it is from the flyting that satiric poetry may well have developed. There was in fact no need for English alliterative poetry to import the flyting from French or Latin. To quote again from Miss Phillpotts, 'We must not forget that Church drama and folk-drama are but the two streams into which the ancient Teutonic ritual drama divided on encountering the mediaeval Church. They meet again in Elizabethan times, and through them there passed into the Shakespearean drama a "wealth of tradition and sentiment elsewhere intercepted by changes of language, religion and education" . . . In England the common Teutonic stock of ritual drama was reinforced by the influx of Scandinavian customs. The influence of the folk-play and the Church drama converged at an auspicious moment, and the ancient tradition took hold on a surer immortality in Shakespeare'. We may therefore perhaps add that in *Wynnere and Wastoure* and *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* we may observe one of the traditions that converge in the Shakespearean drama.

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III.

The melancholy meditation on the degeneracy of the times with which *Wynnere and Wastoure* opens—the sense of the work of creation undone, degree overthrown, the approach of Doomsday—is no doubt itself in accordance with an ancient convention, though in this specific poem evidently too deeply felt and personally endorsed to be merely, as we say, 'conventional'.

> When wawes waxen schall wilde, and walles bene doun,
> And hares appon herthe-stones schall hurcle in hire fourme,
> And eke boyes of no blode, with boste and with pryde,
> Schall wedde ladyes in londe, and lede at hir will,
> Thene dredfull domesdaye it draweth neghe aftir.

It is too simple to regard such meditations as exclusively mediaeval Christian; there is, for example, in *Völuspa* and Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda* a sublime impression of the destruction of the world that is evidently in accordance with ancient Scandinavian mythology. That old Norse vision of society gone to pieces, the social and moral upheaval and shifting of the landmarks which precedes the universal disaster, is indeed unmistakably what recurs here; as it recurs in *Lear* and the other tragic plays of Shakespeare, together with much else that is 'mediaeval', really pre-Christian. The poet here feels that total ruin will follow on these ominous signs of disturbance of the social order, if he and the king do not do their duty, the poet's duty being to reveal the situation in its true light to the King who is the source of honour and social concord.

In this prologue, too, the poet identifies himself with the viewpoint of the country gentlemen of the West who regard with distrust the more fashionable South (where the metropolis is) as having a baneful influence on the younger generation; this is certainly in accord with the concluding passage of the whole poem in which we see rich 'passers through' the metropolis become the companions of Waster to their cost. The prologue concludes with the lament that the poets are no longer favoured by the lords as they once were. Thus the impression is conveyed that the times are such that many grievous problems, social and moral, arise. Among these there is the problem with which the poem will be specifically occupied.

The summer landscape on which the first Fitt opens is a contrast with the broodings and forebodings of the prologue as great as the contrast between summer and winter. From this opening right through the poem the similarities, even in the phrasing, between it and *Piers Plowman* are so noticeable that we cannot but be convinced not only that the two poets were working in a common tradition but that the later poet was acquainted with the work of the earlier. Both poets are wandering in the West when the 'dream' happens to them; perhaps that is not simply, as we have assumed, because the West was the country of their origin, but because there were places in the West—shrines of an earlier worship—where

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sacred associations still lingered. In this much wilder landscape than the enclosed garden of the tradition of *Le Roman de la Rose* the poets wander and fall asleep by a running stream. The trees (to follow *Wynnere and Wastoure*) are the traditionally sacred hawthorn and hazel; and there is God's plenty of all kinds of birds.

As I went in the weste, wandrynge myn one,
Bi a bonke of a bourne, bryghte was the sone,
Undir a worthiliche wodde, by a wale medewe;
Fele floures gan folde ther my fote steppede.
I layde myn hede one ane hill, ane hawthorne be-syde:
The throstills full throly they threped to-gedire;
Hipped up heghwalles fro heselis tyll othire;
Bernacles with thayre billes one barkes thay roungen;
The jay janglede one heghe, jarmede the foles
The bourne full bremly rane the bankes by-twene;
So ruyde were the roughe stremys, and raughten so heghe,
That it was neghande nyghte or I nappe myghte,
For dyn of the depe watir, and dadillyng of fewllys.

These assemblages of birds and (in other poems) beasts may well have taken their origin, if the ritual theory of myth is correct, in the assemblages of humans impersonating birds and beasts in the fertility rituals. 'It seems probable', says Miss Phillpotts, 'that the Eddic drama, too, had some sort of chorus in animal disguise, and that this chorus sang or made music and probably danced in a ring round the chief performers as in the later dramatic games so widespread in Scandinavia. We can perhaps trace some memory of this chorus in the motley crowd of animals which are present at Baldur's funeral'.[5] Certainly the birds in *Wynnere and Wastoure* they recur in different settings throughout the dream—are a diversity of creatures symbolical still of the fertility of high summer and that bounty of nature that is hoarded by Winner and expended by Waster.

To the dreamer as spectator a pageant presents itself, two armies opposing each other in glittering battle array; the scene is a grassy space between hills, a natural stage. The impression certainly is of a ritual battle or tournament impending rather than of an actual historical battle; the dreamer sees, at a higher elevation, on a cliff suspended over the hostile armies, a resplendent royal pavilion, a dazzling and dominant feature of the whole spectacle, decked with blue and gold garters. Worked in blue on the pavilion is the motto, in English, of the Order of the Garter.[6] Conspicuous

[5]Lord Raglan has a chapter in *The Hero* in which he argues, convincingly, that the innumerable traditional tales of talking animals and of shape-shifting arose from the custom of humans wearing animal disguises in dramatic rituals.

[6]Recently founded by King Edward III.

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beside the pavilion there stands a 'wild man'. He *may* be (as Gollancz suggests) the Garter Herald or the Master of the Ceremonies. He has himself no active part to play in the poem. But as a 'wild man'—or a knight impersonating a 'wild man'—he belongs in the symbolism of the poem with the birds and is, as such, a significant figure of the pageantry.

Within the pavilion a king sits in formal state, crowned and enthroned. It has by now become quite clear that the poem is no simple realistic depiction of a battle about to be joined; for a king to sit thus in formal state between two hostile armies would show no practical sense. The king is recognizably Edward III; but he is here conceived in an essentially ritualistic role. The birds reappear as embroidered birds on his richly embroidered costume expressive of the traditional fertility-god aspect of a king.

> Bery-brown as his berde, brouderde with fewlys
> Fawkons of fyne golde, flakerande with wynges . . .
> A brighte belte of ble, broudirde with fewles,
> With drakes and with dukkes, daderande tham semede
> For ferdnes of fawcons fete, lesse fawked thay were.
> And ever I sayd to my-selfe, 'full selly me thynke
> Bot if this renke to the revere ryde umbestounde'.

The actions that follow are essentially ceremonial. The King ceremonially bids a 'beryn'—recognizably the Black Prince—descend to the armies and command them to keep the peace. The Prince arms; the arming of the Prince is described in detail as having itself a symbolical import; then

> He brake a braunche in his hande . . .

The branch corresponds to the holly branch which the Green Knight carries into Arthur's hall as a symbol of peace, or the golden bough which Aeneas breaks off and bears with him as an offering to Proserpina to safeguard him on his journey through the underworld.

A monologue by the Prince as 'messenger', in which he not only delivers his message but describes what he sees, occupies the rest of the first Fitt. By means of this monologue we, the audience, have described to us the appearance of the two opposing armies and who they are. They are such as could not come together on any actual field of battle; for they are the army of the Winners and the army of the Wasters.

There are folk of France, Lorraine, Lombardy, Spain and various other lands beside England in the army of the Winners, who appear to be chiefly merchants and churchmen. This motley allied army includes the army of the Pope himself and contingents of the monastic orders, each arrayed behind a heraldic banner.[7] The Wasters are said to include many good men-at-arms—knights and squires—members of the feudal nobility, the landed gentry of England.

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Each army produces a spokesman. This Winner and this Waster are the two antagonists in the flyting match which is to take the place of an armed combat.

I holde hym bot a fole that fightis whils flyttynge may helpe.

Both acknowledge the King as being he on whom they are dependent for food and clothing.

And sayden, 'Sir sandisman, sele the be-tyde!
Well knowe we the kyng; he clothes us bothe,
And hase us fosterde and fedde this fyve and twenty wyntere.

The King calls for wine; the poet also (as minstrel) calls upon *his* company to fill up the goblets

Full freschely and faste, for here a fitt endes.

It is the conventional ending of each Fitt—indicating evidently a pause—and corresponds to the curtain at the end of an act in the modern theatre.

But also the call to drink in unison at intervals here (as in *Sir Gawayne* and elsewhere) distinguishes the dramatic poem which had an immediately ritual origin and was intended for recitation to a convivial but attentive company—distinguishes it from the 'art' poem in the modern sense like *Pearl*, which was not public but private, and from the homiletic poem, like *Cleanness* or *Patience*, which (though meant as improving literature for an audience) had little social function. This drinking at stated intervals is clearly in the tradition of the ritual drinking that had originally been an essential feature of the old religion of the Scandinavian and Teutonic societies and that explains the obstinate practice of heavy drinking in Northern Europe against which preachers inveighed throughout the Middle Ages. These drinking rites were retained by the mediaeval Guilds of Northern Europe, undoubtedly with some memory of their original solemnity as binding a company together (according to degree) and promoting blessing and luck in a household. The banquet in the great hall had a similar significance, and still has in Shakespeare. Undoubtedly our poet, too, is here playing upon this traditional memory to draw his audience more completely into his poem's action.

Within this formal setting (established in the first Fitt) the flyting match—a duologue occupying the second and third of the three Fitts of the poem—takes place before the King as judge.

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[7]The banner of the Dominicans, for example, is black with a ball in the middle,

Reghte siche as the sone es in the someris tyde,
When moste es the maze one Missomer Even.

The Augustinian banner is, on the other hand, 'whitte als the whalles bone'.

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The flyting, though satiric, is no mere farcical exchange of rowdy abuse. The opposing aspects of a problem of the greatest contemporary relevance—the problem of the *right* relation between economy and expenditure in the kingdom—are presented in the concreteness of this dramatic duologue, responsibly and intelligently debated and, as a consequence, more clearly apprehended. The problem is one on which it was indeed for the King himself to judge; the poem presents the various considerations which might enable him to come to a right decision.

The advantage of such a treatment of such a problem is exactly that it is a poetic-dramatic treatment. The poem is no mere political-economic discussion abstracted from the way actual people live and feel, from any realization of what they live for and what are the possible ends of living, such abstraction as perhaps accounts for the unreality of modern political and economic discussions. (It is simply not true that we attain precision of thought, any more than we attain precision of feeling, by a process of abstraction, by dissociating discourse from living sensation and images.) The duologue between Winner and Waster is not one of those discussions in which it makes no odds what kind of character each of the opponents is. The opposition is not simply one of ideas but of persons; two opposing ways of life are balanced against each other. The flyting has thus the dramatic aspect of a quarrel between two mutually repellent individuals; it springs from a clash of character and temperament, from a natural antipathy between two opposite types of personality and not merely from a difference of opinion. The life of the traditional contest between summer and winter still underlies and lends some of its force to this new contest which, with its different or more complex significance, has evolved from the old.[8]

Nevertheless, though the flyting between Winner and Waster springs from a mutual antagonism, the arguments of these well-matched antagonists are as full of sense as they are lively and sharp. Sound reasons, evolved from the concrete experience of daily living, are put forward and tested against each other; the colloquial English of the duologue is saturated with proverbial wisdom, the crystallised wisdom of a people's experience. We listen

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[8]The old summer and winter contest unmistakably underlies the 13th century English debate poem, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, the Owl being the bird of winter, the Nightingale the bird of summer. In the 8th century Latin *Conflictus Veris et Hiemis*, Hiems is a Winner in that he enjoys the contemplation of the accumulated wealth of the year, a Waster in that he feasts on it.

> Sunt mihi divitiae, sunt et convivia laeta . . .
> sed placet optatas gazas numerare per arcas
> et gaudere cibis simul . . .

Ver reminds him however that spring and summer provide him with the wealth he enjoys.

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to English being spoken as it must actually have been spoken; its rhythms are caught up into the rhythms of the poetry. With this colloquial English the contemporary life enters and is vigorously and vividly present in the imagery. There emerges from the poem a total wisdom of broad human experience. The social and economic problem debated is thus realized as involving real human and moral issues; it is not dissociated from a regard for human values, a consideration of the nature of human life and of what are the ends of living.

Both the antagonists appeal not only to economic laws but to the same traditional religious morality; the pattern of the Seven Deadly Sins, familiar from innumerable sermons, underlies their opposing arguments. Winner accuses Waster not only of disregard for worldly prudence and of socially irresponsible neglect of his inherited estate but of sinfully wasteful Pride. Waster recklessly wastes through Pride what Winner prudently labours to win.

> Alle that I wynn thurgh wit the wastes thurgh pryde;
> I gedir, I glene, and he lattys goo sone;
> I pryke and I pryne, and he the purse opynes.
> Why has this cayteffe no care how men corne sellen?
> His londes liggen alle ley, his lomes aren solde,
> Downn bene his dowfehowses, drye bene his poles;
> The devyll wounder the wele he weldys at home,
> Bot hungere and heghe horses and howndes full kene!

Hunger is the inevitable accompaniment of the young lord's pride in keeping high horses and hounds.

But Waster, on his side, can accuse Winner also of violating the traditional morality. If the sin of the Wasters is Pride, the sin of the Winners is Avarice. When wealth is hoarded the poor suffer, and the soul of the hoarder, regardless of the poor and over-anxious about worldly possessions, is in danger of Hell.[9]

> For siche a synn haste thou solde thi soule in-to helle.

Christ's injunction, 'Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth where moth and rust doth corrupt . . .', is here echoed unexpectedly by one of the Wasters of the world (as it is echoed, with an individual distortion of her own, by the Wife of Bath).

> When thou haste waltered and went and wakede alle the nyghte,
> And iche a wy in this werlde that wonnes the abowte,
> And hase werpede thy wyde howses full of wolle sakkes,—
> The bemys benden at the rofe, siche bakone there hynges,
> Stuffed are sterlynges undere stelen bowndes,—
> What scholde worthe of that wele, if no waste come?
> Some scholde rote, some ruste, some ratones fede.
> Let be thy cramynge of thi kystes, for Cristis lufe of heven!
> Late the peple and the pore hafe parte of thi silvere.

[9]This note of concern for the hungry poor has become much more insistent in *Piers Plowman*.

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The sense is conveyed of laboriously amassed winter stores and wealth glutting and overloading the house ('the bemys benden at the rofe . . .').

If Waster can describe Winner as wakeful at night, preoccupied with the accumulation of wealth, Winner in his turn can describe Waster also as 'wakynge in winteres nyghttis' dissipating wealth 'in angarte of pryde'. Waster, the prodigal reveller, devours his substance in riotous living with companions clothed in finery that costs an estate,[10] piles up a tavern bill that can only be paid by selling his land. Winner illustrates his argument with a realistic impression of Waster and his companions in a tavern.[11]

> Thou ledis renkes in thy rowte wele rychely attyrede;
> Some hafe girdills of golde, that more gude coste
> Than alle the faire fre londe that tye by-fore haden.
> Ye folowe noghte youre fadirs that fosterde yow alle
> A kynde herveste to cache, and cornes to wynn,
> For the colde wyntter and the kene with clengande frostes,
> Sythen dropeles drye in the dede monethe.
> And thou wolle to the taverne, by-fore the toune-hede,
> Iche beryne redy withe a bolle to blerren thyn eghne,
> Hete the whatte thou have schalte, and whatt thyn hert lykes,
> Wyfe, wedowe, or wenche, that wonnes there aboute.
> Then es there bott 'fille in' and 'feche forthe', Florence to schewe,
> 'Wee-hee', and 'worthe up', wordes ynewe.
> Bot when this wele es a-waye, the wyne moste be payede fore:
> Than lympis yowe weddis to laye, or youre londe selle.

Waster's prodigality (it will be observed) is set over against the prudent traditional way of life, gathering in and conserving of the harvest as one's fathers did, laying in of stores of food and fuel for the winter, careful management and improvement of one's estate; the lord of the manor has in these respects a responsibility towards his people.

> Teche thy men for to tille and tynen thyn feldes;
> Rayse up thi rent-howses, ryme up thi yerdes,
> Owthere hafe as thou haste done, and hope aftir werse—
> That es firste the faylynge of fode, and than the fire aftir,
> To brene the alle at a birre, for thi bale dedis:
> The more colde es to come, als me a clerke tolde.

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[10]Compare 'lordships sold to maintain ladyships' (*The Revenger's Tragedy*). The mediaeval morality tradition, which is more than simply the tradition of the Morality Plays, persists, as has been remarked, through Elizabethan and Jacobean drama.

[11]We may again compare the scene in *Piers Plowman* when Gluttony on his way to church drops into the ale-house instead.

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Waster's self-justification is the rather unexpected one that with his feasts he feeds the poor, which is pleasing to Christ. His argument in general is that wealth expended benefits everyone, including the poor, whereas wealth hoarded—hid away from the fructifying sun—benefits no one.

> With oure festes and oure fare we feden the pore;
> It es plesynge to the Prynce that paradyse wroghte;
> When Cristes peple hath parte hym payes alle the better
> Then here ben hodirde and hidde and happede in cofers,
> That it no sonn may see thurgh seven wyntter ones;
> Owthir it freres feche, when thou fey worthes,
> To payntten with thaire pelers, or pergett with thaire walles.

So Pope, after describing with distaste the Italianate magnificence of Timon's villa, his vain extravagance, can add the comment, on a different note of serious sincerity,

> Yet hence the poor are clothed, the hungry fed.

The Popeian ironic wit clearly indicates, however, that Timon fulfils the divine will in a regulated universe without knowing he is doing so and, indeed, by his very vices.

> . . . What his hard heart denies
> His charitable vanity supplies.

What counterpoises Waster's account of himself, supplements and critically places it—in that respect may be said to correspond to what Pope's irony does—is simply Winner's satiric account of Waster. But in his reference to sharing with the poor, who are Christ's people, Waster has evidently spoken with due sincerity; the mediaeval Waster is indeed a simpler, more spontaneous and more human sinner than the Augustan great lord whose expenditure on his outsize mansion and gardens is a form of Pride that is both more megalomaniac and less spontaneous than Waster's.

It is appropriate therefore that Waster should accuse Winner of being no lover of 'mirth', a word which had a richer and fuller value in mediaeval English than in modern.

> . . . thou durste never
> Mawngery ne myndale, ne never myrthe lovediste.
> A dale aftir thi daye dose the no mare
> Than a lighte lanterne late appone nyghte,
> When it es borne at thi bakke . . . [12]

Wanhope (according to Waster) is the brother of Winner. The force of that statement will only be realized if it is remembered that according to mediaeval Christian tradition Wanhope (Despair) is itself, as implying a failure of faith in the divine grace, a sinful

[12]Compare in *Piers Plowman* 'chastity without charity' likened to an unlighted lantern.

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condition. It is Faustus's condition at the end of Marlowe's play; the Doctor cannot be saved because he cannot believe he can be saved; it is the final, deadliest condition of the lost.[13] Waster, the goliard, goes recklessly beyond what is ordinate, however, when he wishes not only Winner and his brother, Wanhope, drowned in the deep sea but all the fast-days of the Church as well. His argument (in this Fitt) concludes with a challenge to actual combat and with a couplet on the proverbial timidity of property owners.

> The richere of ranke wele, the rathere will drede:
> The more havande that he hathe, the more of hert feble.

Waster has not, however, the last word in the second Fitt. An impression by Winner of one of Waster's extravagant and immoderate feasts is the grand climax of this Fitt. The feast may surely itself be regarded as another of the poem's traditional features rather than *simply* a reflection of the social life of the time. The feast is a recurrent feature of epic poetry—both Homeric and Northern—and also of West Midland alliterative poetry. Possibly it goes back to the feast that celebrated the sacred marriage of the goddess (or queen) with the victor in the ritual contest.[14] The chief difference in *Wynnere and Wastoure* is that the feast is *disapprovingly* described by Winner who, indeed, weeps for sorrow at the sinful extravagance of such a feast. This impression of Winner weeping at the imagination of a feast which might be expected rather to produce a mirthful effect, as of Yule, is certainly not without a comic aspect. It is doubtful who gains or loses more in the argument by the evocation of the feast, Winner or Waster. Winner declares himself miserable at the sinful waste and excess of the gluttonous feast; but, as he contrasts his own frugal meals, there is perhaps an element of envy in his grief. It is as if, in not sharing Waster's feast, Winner feels himself to be something of a loser. He takes his revenge, perhaps, by reminding his audience of the uncomfortable effects of gluttony; it burns the bowels. Nevertheless, Gluttony is indeed another of the Seven Deadly Sins, and Winner has doubtless both prudence and the preachers on his side in his condemnation. On the other hand, among the flesh and fowl in plenty of the great Pagan feast we recognize once again the birds—translated now to the table.

> The bores hede schall be broghte with bayes appon lofte,
> Buk-tayles full brode in brothes there be-syde,
> Venyson with the frumentes, and fesanttes full riche,

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[13]So also the Seven Deadly Sins in *Piers Plowman* Passus V, sorry for what they are, are themselves despairing.

[14]Thus Cornford observes that at the feast with which an Aristophanic comedy characteristically concludes a mute bride, who has not previously appeared among the *dramatis personae*, almost invariably turns up to accompany the hero in the *comos* or triumphal procession.

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Baken mete ther-by one the burde sett,
Chewettes of choppede flesche, charbiande fewlis,
And iche a segge that I see has sexe mens doke . . .
Roste with the riche sewes, and the ryalle spyces,
Kiddes cleven by the rigge, quartered swannes,
Tartes of ten ynche, that tenys myn hert
To see the borde over-brade with blasande disches,
Als it were a rayled rode with rynges and stones . . .
And ye will hafe birdes bownn one a broche riche,
Barnakes and buturs and many billed snyppes,
Larkes and lyngwhittes, lapped in sogoure,
Wodcokkes and wodwales, full wellande hote . . .

The music at the feast is, to Winner's mind, another form of boastful and blasphemous pride.

Me tenyth at your trompers, thay tounen so heghe
That iche a gome in the gate goullyng may here:
Than wil they say to them-selfe, as thay samen ryden,
Ye hafe no myster of the helpe of the heven kyng.

Winner concludes his argument in this Fitt, as Waster his, with a proverbial observation.

Better were meles many than a mery nyghte.

In the third (and final) Fitt, Waster opens the second (and final) bout of the flyting. Although an abundant harvest is a blessing from Heaven, Waster observes that it does not at all suit Winner. It brings down prices and reduces Winner to despair. Winner's private interests are in this respect counter to the common good; he is thus represented satirically as a character against nature and providence.

Then the pure plente of corne that the peple sowes,
That God will graunte, of his grace, to growe on the erthe,
Ay to appaire the pris, that it passe nott to hye,
Schal make the to waxe wod for wanhope in erthe,
To hope aftir an harde yere, to honge thi-selven.[15]

Waster seeks to show further that Winner is liable to become a menace to social stability. He himself, it seems, is a staunch upholder of the established feudal order.[16] In such an order the poor also should have their share.

[15]Gollancz, in a note in his edition of the poem, aptly quotes the Porter in *Macbeth*, 'Here's a farmer that hanged himself on the expectation of plenty'. He explains that 'wanhope in erthe' here means 'despair at plenty'. '*Erthe* is a different word from the ordinary *earth*. Its first sense is the act of earing or ploughing, tilling; produce of arable land; and so *crop*'.

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Late lordes lyfe als tham liste, laddes as tham falles,—
Thay the bacon and beefe, thay botours and swannes,
Thay the roughe of the rye, thay the rede whete,
Thay the grewell gray, and thay the gude sewes;
And then may the peple hafe parte in povert that standes,
Sum gud morsell of mete to mend with thair chere.

If hunting, hawking and fishing were neglected and, as a consequence, birds, beasts and fishes multiplied without depletion, degree itself would be overthrown; for (Waster argues) there would be such a state of abundance in the land that necessity would no longer compel any man to serve a lord. 'Ane henne at ane halpeny' (a phrase that evokes the familiar market) would thus monstrously disturb the whole established order of society.

If fewlis flye scholde forthe, and fongen be never,
And wild bestis in the wodde wone al thaire lyve,
And fisches flete in the flode, and ichone frete other,
Ane henne at ane halpeny by halfe yeris ende,
Schold not a ladde be in londe a lorde for to serve.[17]

Waster concludes proverbially that a Winner must have a Waster.

Who so wele schal wyn, a wastour moste he fynde.

That it is Waster himself who has departed from the wise traditional way of life is the implication of Winner's reply. Waster has neglected his responsibilities as a landowner and instead of improving his estate has caused it to be broken up to pay for vanity;

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[16]Though the greater merchants—'prowde marchandes of pris' (in contrast to 'pedders in towns')—have now evidently an acknowledged position in society with the lords and prelates.

[17]This mediaeval English passage might well be compared with the Shakespearean passage in Milton's *Comus* discussed in *Revaluation* —Comus's argument (addressed to 'the aidless innocent lady') about Nature

. . . quite surcharged with her own weight
And strangled with her waste fertility
Th' earth cumber'd and the wing'd air dark'd with plumes.

The Garden of Eden is here out of hand, run wild, grown excessive as a consequence of Nature's not being controlled and disciplined by being used. Though Comus is tempting the Lady to laxity on the plea that it would be ungrateful to reject the gifts of the Giver, there is paradoxically a sound moral and utilitarian element in his argument; and in the Shakespearean concrete richness of the poetry, there is, at the same time, conveyed a marvellous impression of the fertility of nature.

And set to work millions of spinning worms
That in their green shops weave the smooth-haired silk.

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his paternal woods are sold for the present satisfaction of the vanity of women, regardless of the future needs of his children. Winner begins on a note of irony.

> . . . me wondirs in hert
> Of thies povre penyles men that peloure will by,
> Sadills of sendale, with sercles full riche.
> Lesse that ye wrethe your wifes, thaire willes to folowe,
> Ye sellyn wodd aftir wodde in a wale tyme,
> Bothe the oke and the assche and all that ther growes;
> The spyres and the yonge sprynge ye spare to your children
> And sayne God wil grant it his grace to grow at the laste,
> For to schadewe your sones: bot the schame es your ownn.

In the former times landowners took pleasure in showing their guests round their estates; at this point we are given by Winner a charming glimpse of the human ways of the old-fashioned type of landowner.

> Your forfadirs were fayne, when any frende come,
> For to schake to the schawe, and schewe hym the estres,
> In iche holt that thay had ane hare for to fynde,
> Bryng to the brode lande bukkes ynewe,
> To lache and to late goo, to lightten thaire hertis.
> Now es it sett and solde, my sorowe es the more,
> Wasted alle wilfully your wyfes to paye.

Winner here returns to the theme of 'lordships sold to maintain ladyships'; estates inherited from one's fathers to pass on to one's children are now converted instead into the extravagant dresses of women in the phantastic new fashions.

> That are had lordes in londe and ladyes riche,
> Now are thay nysottes of the new gett, so nysely attyred,
> With side slabbande sleves, sleght to the grounde,
> Ourlede all umbtourne with ermyn aboute,
> That as harde es, I hope, to handil in the derne,
> Als a cely symple wenche that never silke wroghte.[18]

Winner finally reminds Waster that Mary, Queen of Heaven, was simply clothed on earth, as an example to leave pomp and vanity.

Waster has, however, the last word in this final bout of the flyting, though I think we are not therefore to regard his argument as prevailing. As a chivalric lover (somewhat like Chaucer's young Squire) whose lady's part is loyally to love him, inspire him to be bold in battle and to shun dishonour, he expresses indignation at Winner's meanness.

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[18]The sewing of silk embroidery was the occupation of high-born ladies.

> And ye loveli ladies with youre longe fyngres
> That habbeth selk and sendel, seweth when tyme is.
> (*Piers Plowman*)

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What hafe oure clothes coste the, caytef, to by,
That thou schal birdes up-brayd of thaire bright wedis,
Sythen that we vouche safe that the silver payen.
It lyes wele for a lede his leman to fynde.

He professes also, as a true and good feudal lord, to be rightly pleased to see his people go proudly clad.

And if my peple ben prode, me payes alle the better
To see tham faire and free to-fore with myn eghne;
And ye negardes, appon nyghte, nappe ye never so harde,
Raxillen at your routtyng . . .

Certain features of this contest between an evidently youthful Waster and an elderly Winner appear, indeed, to be but new shoots from the old contest between Youth and Age—that variant of the contest between Summer and Winter. Waster sees Winner, with a new moral emphasis, as an avaricious old man. The Devil and the executors will divide Winner's goods at his death; he will have Hell in return for what he has saved on earth. Waster cuts a final figure as once more, the Revellour who advocates a short life and a merry one. In so doing he places himself, at the same time as he places Winner, in the context of the traditional morality.

Take the coppe as it comes, the case as it falles;
For who-so lyfe may lengeste lympes to feche
Woodd that he waste schall, to warmen his helys,
Ferrere than his fadir dide by fyvetene myle.[19]

Though the poem as we have it appears to break off before it is quite completed, the King's judgment which is likely to have been the main final thing seems to be substantially complete. We may take it that it is the judgment which the poet judged should be the King's, and which, by this means, he suggests to the King. The King is represented as looking in a benignant manner upon the antagonists both of whom appear therefore to be regarded as in their different uses acceptable. The King's judgment indeed implies no condemnation of the one in favour of the other, but rather the maintenance of a balance between them in relation to the ever-changing economy of the kingdom. Winner is to go abroad, but it is made clear that it is only temporarily. He is to stay with those who love him most, the Pope and the Cardinals—a reflection upon the Pope and the Cardinals as hoarders of wealth: but it is certainly no hardship for Winner to stay with his friends. He is, moreover, to return to the King whenever supplies of money are needed; he represents a reserve which can be drawn upon at need.

[19] *i.e.* "The longer you live, the more timber you will use up for fuel, and in your old age you will have to send a long way—fifteen miles farther than your father did—for the wood to be wasted in keeping yourself warm". (Gollancz's paraphrase). A sombre play of wit.

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Waster is required to dwell in London for the present, there to keep a look-out for anyone with a purse passing through town and cause him to spend his money in riotous waste. The poem as we have it concludes—or almost so—with an impression of Waster's London life. Thus even in the judgment the satiric note persists.

Chese the forthe in-to the Chepe, a chambre thou rere;
Loke thi wyndowe be wyde, and wayte the aboute,
Where any berande potener thurgh the burgh passe;
Teche hym to the Tonne till he tayte worthe;
Doo hym drynk al nyghte that he dry be at morow,
Sythen ken hym to the Crete to comforth his vaynes,
Brynge hym to Bred Strete, bikken with thi fynger,
Schew hym of fatt shepe scholdirs ynewe,
Hotte for the hungry, a hen other twayne,
Sett hym softe one a sete, and sythen send after,
Bryng out of the burgh the best thou may fynde,
And luke thi knave hafe a knoke bot he the clothe spred;
Bot late hym paye or he passe, and pik hym so clene
That fynd a peny in his purse, and put owte his eghe.
When that es dronken and don, dwell ther no longer,
Bot teche hym owt of the townn, to trotte aftir more.

The birds make their final appearance, in plentiful waste, in Waster's larder.

The herons, the hasteletez, the hennes wele served,
The pertrikes, the plovers, the other pulled byrddes,
The albus, the osulles, the egretes dere;
The more thu wastis thi wele, the better the wynner lykes.

Thus, on the one hand, Waster's London life is recognized as promoting a necessary flow of wealth; on the other hand, the accumulation of wealth by Winner provides a reserve for which there may come in time a need. It seems at that moment to have been more expedient that spending rather than saving should be encouraged. But the two antagonists are found to be complementary. The accumulators of wealth and the dissipators are both necessary in the economy of a kingdom; the problem is to keep an appropriate balance between them, as in a healthy body. This economic problem is, however, as it is presented in the poem, also a moral problem. Winner and Waster could be aspects of the same person. The way of wisdom in the individual life, as in the life of a kingdom, would seem to be to keep a just balance between the two forms of excess represented by Winner and Waster.

IV.

The Three Ages of *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* are the three ages of man, Youth, Middle Age and Old Age; each age is either becoming or has been the other two, yet in the flyting of this poem they compose the three antagonists. Youth is a Waster and Middle

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Age a Winner; Old Age, who has been successively both the other two, shows in himself the vanity of both. The dreamer thus contemplates the three successive ages of his own—and everyman's—life. As the lawless green hunter or poacher—the Robin Hood or Summer King—of the prologue he is himself evidently still identifiable with the first of the three Ages. The pageant he witnesses and the flyting he overhears in his dream produce in the natural man a salutary recognition of his own mortality. The poem thus establishes a wise attitude to life—involving a recognition of death by presenting an inclusive view of the human condition.

The man's delight in the exercise and skill of deer-stalking and in wild nature which seems itself to share and utter his delight, these feelings both outside and inside himself convey the 'Pride of Life' experience; and that is the cunning prelude to the debate of the Three Ages of Man and the contemplation of Life in its relation to ultimate Age and Death. This is sophisticated art indeed. There is a compelling emotional logic of events in this poem as in *Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight*. It is hard to be patient with the conventional view that such a poem is aimless meandering in an uncouth dialect and versification.

The wild woodland landscape of the prologue is again, in this West Midland poem, unlike in its wildness the enclosed rose-garden or gentle flower-embroidered meadow of the tradition of *Le Roman de la Rose*, though it is a Maytime scene. There is again—by the side of a stream where fertilizing dews and mists fall—God's plenty of flowers and wild creatures, the birds and beasts of this mountainous forest of Kynd.

> There the gryse was grene growen with floures—
> The primrose, the pervynke, and piliole the riche—
> The dewe appon dayses donkede full faire,
> Burgons and blossoms and braunches full swete,
> And the mery mystes full myldely gane falle:
> The cukkowe, the cowschote, kene were thay bothen,
> And the throstills full throly threpen in the bankes,
> And iche foule in that frythe faynere than other
> That the derke was done and the daye lightenede:
> Hertys and hyndes one hillys thay goven,
> The foxe and the filmarte thay flede to the erthe,
> The hare hurkles by hawes, and harde thedir dryves,
> And ferkes faste to hir fourme and fatills hir to sitt.

The poet represents himself as entering the woods, a lawless hunter, in all the pride of manhood—'my werdes to dreghe'.

> Als I stode in that stede one stalkynge I thoghte;
> Both my body and my bowe I buskede with leves;
> And turnede to-wardes a tree and tariede there a while;
> And als I lokede to a launde a littill me be-syde,
> I seghe ane hert with ane hede, ane heghe for the nones.

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He is 'buskede with leves' for camouflage on a realistic deer-stalking venture, but his being thus decked in green leaves in May unmistakably suggests, at the same time, a Jack-in-the-Green or May King.

A hunting episode is a recurrent feature, it will be observed, of the poems in the West Midland alliterative tradition. Hunting was, of course, a frequent and necessary pursuit in an England which was still largely wild and untamed, in which the human communities were still barely holding their own against the depredations of the multitudes of wild creatures, and in which the wild creatures were themselves a much-needed source of food. Nevertheless, these hunting episodes in the poetry, though they certainly derive much in the way of realism from direct observation and participation in the craft of hunting, are almost certainly another of the traditional features that go back ultimately to the ancient rituals. If one examines their nature, the emphasis on spectacle and costume in the descriptions, and considers the frequency of their recurrence as a significant feature of the pageantry in the different poems, one cannot but feel reasonably convinced that they belong—as much as does the feast—to the traditional pattern. The kind of episode, frequent in the traditional literature of the Middle Ages, in which a hero or knight meets a hart or other animal that turns out to be a person metamorphosed, does not seem very far removed from the episode of the prologue of our poem. The hart in our poem is no longer a person disguised as a hart or (the myth derived from the ritual) a person metamorphosed; yet even so the hart was certainly by no means so simply a hart as it is to us. We need only recall its place in mediaeval Christian symbolism. Hardin Craig in *The Enchanted Glass* instances among 'the losses in the field of the emotional appeal which Elizabethan literature has suffered' our loss of the emotional appeal of animals, except perhaps for the cat, owl and snake. The process of evolution by which we have arrived at a hunting episode of the particular nature and quality of the one in our poem is thus almost certainly the process from ritual (or myth) towards naturalism.

The realistic communication of the experience and excitement of an actual deer-stalking is, if this theory is correct, a late sophistication in such a development.

> I waitted wiesly the wynde by waggynge of leves,
> Stalkede full stilly no stikkes to breke,
> And crepite to a crabtre and coverede me ther-undere:
> Then I bende up my bowe and bownede me to schote.

Not only is the excitement communicated but also sensations of discomfort, the annoyance from the gnats that is aggravated to an exquisite torment because the stalker may not make the least movement.

> Then I moste stonde als I stode, and stirre no fote ferrere,
> For had I myntid or movede or made any synys,
> Alle my layke hade bene loste that I hade longe wayttede.
> Bot gnattes gretely me grevede and gnewen myn eghne.

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The cutting-up of the slain deer is realistically described in technical detail[20]—'the breris and braken blody'. The slaying was evidently a lawless act; the slayer must conceal the pieces of the slain animal until nightfall in a hole under fern, heath and 'hore mosse' and the horns and the head in a hollow oak, and must himself lurk near-by to guard them from wild pigs that 'wyse bene of nesse'.

Most likely the slaying of the deer was the way to secure a vision or dream-guidance. Alfred Nutt, the folklorist, noted instances from Grail and Mabinogi legends of the hero hunting a stag, slaying it and falling under an 'illusion' in consequence; the stag was a regular messenger from the faery world and thus got into Christian hagiology.[21] The poets of *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* and of *Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight* could rely on their audience's knowing the Arthurian and folk-lore motifs and being familiar with the Grail mythology. Further, there seems to be evidence that a slain stag was then regarded as a trophy proving that the hero has arrived at manhood. Both these significances appear to be relevant to our poem. It may be that the hunts here and in *Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight* were introduced to interest the huntin'-and-shootin' section of the audience in the great hall, as the descriptions of costume and lovemaking may have been introduced to interest and please the ladies. But while that may explain why the poet should introduce these subjects it does not explain the use he makes of them as an artist. The initial deer-stalking episode and the later episode of Youth hawking by a river have clearly the greatest relevance in conveying the Pride of Life experience that is contrasted with Age. The slaying of the deer may therefore be assumed to have had both the meanings I have indicated.

Certainly the slaying of the deer is the preliminary or overture to the dramatic pageant which in effect is what the slayer proceeds to witness and overhear in his dream-vision. The Three Ages are seen by him as the three figures of this pageant; the impression—the emphasis of the description being on their visual appearances and 'array'—is of the entrance of three costumed actors.

Youth is a spring-like figure in green— the greenness that had the well-known significance—and is gaily and richly attired, with a profusion of embroidery and jewellery that, as in *Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight*, is significant of life resurgent. He is a rider; he rides—standing up in the stirrups,—hawk in hand, as do similar figures in the Ballads and other traditional literature.

> A bolde beryn one a blonke bownne for to ryde,
> A hathelle on ane heghe horse with hauke appon hande, . . .
> He ne hade no hode ne no hatte bot his here one,
> A chaplet one his chefe-lere, chosen for the nones,

[20]As in *Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight*. Fitt III.
[21]The general process is illustrated in great detail in Saintyves' authoritative work *Les Saints Successeurs des Dieux*.

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Raylede alle with rede rose, richeste of floures,
With trayfoyles and trewloves of full triede perles,
With a chefe charebocle chosen in the myddes.
He was gerede alle in grene, alle with golde by-wevede,
Embroddirde alle with besanttes and beralles full riche:
His colere with calsydoynnes clustrede full thikke,
With many dyamandes full dere dighte one his sleves.
The semys with saphirs sett were full many,
With emeraudes and amatistes appon iche syde,
With full riche rubyes raylede by the hemmes;
The price of that perry were worthe powndes full many.
His sadill was of sykamoure that he satt inn,
His bridell alle of brente golde with silke brayden raynes,
His trapoure was of tartaryne, that traylede to the erthe,
And he throly was threven of thritty yere of elde,
And there-to yonge and yape, and Youthe was his name.

Middle-Age is soberly clad in autumnal russet, with a grey tunic. He is a Winner, a man of property, preoccupied with worldly matters. As Youth has the aspect of Pride, Middle-Age with his money bags has the aspect of Avarice. He is seen in a sitting posture; he sits pondering on his gold and the management of his estate, respectable, worldly Middle-Age. His worldly life is reproduced in his thoughts.

The seconde segge in his sete satte at his ese,
A renke alle in rosette that rowmly was schapyn;
In a golyone of graye girde in the myddes,
And iche bagge in his bosome bettir than othere.
One his golde and his gude gretly he mousede,
His renttes and his reches rekened he full ofte,
Of mukkyng, of marlelyng, and mendynge of howses,
Of benes of his bondemen, of benefetis many,
Of presanttes of polayle, of purfilis als,
Of purches of ploughe-londes, of parkes full faire,
Of profettis of his pastours, that his purse mendis,
Of stiewardes, of storrours, stirkes to bye,
Of clerkes of countours, his courtes to holde,
And alle his witt in this werlde was one his wele one

Elde (Old Age) is seen as a figure leaning on his side, clad in black, with beads in his hand. He cries 'kenely one Criste'; yet he is 'envyous and angrye'. If Youth is proud and Middle-Age avaricious, Elde has the aspects of Envy and Wrath among the Sins. His thoughts indeed are turning to religion, he is sorry for his sins; but so, in *Piers Plowman,* are the Seven Deadly Sins themselves penitent and weep for what they know themselves to be. Elde is, then, the physical and mental condition of being old visualized as a *tableau* figure but, within that formality, presented with disturbing realism.

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The thirde was a laythe lede lenyde one his syde,
A beryne bownn alle in blake, with bedis in his hande;
Croked and courbede, encrampeschett for elde;
Alle disfygured was his face, and fadit his hewe,
His berde and browes were blanchede full whitte,
And the hare one his hede hewede of the same,
He was ballede and blynde and alle babirlippede,
Totheles and tenefull, I tell yowe for sothe;
And ever he momelide and ment and mercy he askede,
And cried kenely one Criste, and his crede sayde,
With sawtries full sere tymes, to sayntes in heven;
Envyous and angrye, and Elde was his name.
I helde hym be my hapynge a hundrethe yeris of age,
And bot his cruche and his couche he carede for no more.

Elde is, however, represented not only as physically repellent; there is no certainty that he is wiser, because of his years, than Youth or Middle-Age. Wisdom, it would seem, is in not failing to take due account of Elde as the final condition of a human life; he is there to be reckoned with in any complete view of human life.

The flyting in which the Three engage starts up out of the antipathy of Middle Age to Youth. Youth ('this gome alle in grene'), hawk in hand on his high horse, is a courtly lover who sighs for love and vows to wear no hood or hat till he has jousted and performed feats of arms for his lady's sake. To Middle-Age ('this gome alle in graye') this is all folly in comparison with substantial things, by which he means property. For all Youth's fine array, which is vanity, he has no land. All his possessions glow and glitter on his back. With his horse and bridle he ought to buy cattle, with his jewels buy land; be a Winner instead of a Waster. ('Fantome and foly' here remind one of the value Chaucer's 'fantasye' often has.)

For alle fantome and foly that thou with faris.
Where es the londe and the lythe that thou arte lorde over?
For alle thy ryalle arraye, renttis hase thou none;
Ne for thi pompe and thi pride, penyes bot fewe:
For alle thi golde and thi gude gloes one thi clothes,
And thou hafe caughte thi kaple, thou cares for no fothire.
Bye the stirkes with thi stede, and stalles thaym make;
Thi brydell of brent golde wolde bullokes the gete;
The pryce of thi perrye wolde purches the londes.

The value of Youth may be all 'fantome and foly'; it remains to be seen, however, whether the values of Middle-Age, those of worldly prudence, are any more real.

There may indeed be justice in Youth's rejoinder that Middle-Age has no god other than his goods. Youth, who does not fail to acknowledge God who gave him life, declares that for his part he would rather be arrayed for battle and see a knight ride at him than possess all the gold, property and people that Middle-Age possesses; he would rather ride hawking by a river.

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The impression of Youth hawking by a river is one of the most vivid things in English mediaeval poetry. It seems, through the Pride of Life experience, to relate Youth to the dreamer himself, who is also a hunter, with the difference that whereas the dreamer is a lawless hunter, Youth rides hawking with full assurance as to a knightly sport he is born to. The episode of a company of gaily clad, glittering personages—sometimes they are the 'fayerye'—who ride hawking by a river is yet another of those episodes recurrent in mediaeval romances and ballads that are almost certainly mythological or ritualistic in origin. The hawking episode in our poem surely comes from the same source, though we may once again agree that it derives its realistic aspect from direct observation of the contemporary knightly sport. The hawks in their Pride that 'heghe willen flye . . . as it were heven aungelles' are at the same time, however, as much symbols as the Windhover in Hopkins's poem.

And ryde to a revere redily there-aftir,
With haukes full hawtayne that heghe willen flye;
And when the fewlis bene founden, fawkoneres hyenn
To lache oute thaire lessches and lowsen thaym sone,
And keppyn of thaire caprons, and casten fro honde,
And than the hawteste in haste hyghes to the towre,
With theire bellys so brighte blethely thay ryngen,
And there they hoven appon heghte, as it were heven angelles.
Then the fawkoners full fersely to floodes thay hyen,
To the revere with thaire roddes to rere up the fewles,
Sowssches thaym full serely to serven thaire hawkes.
Than tercelettes full tayttely telys doun stryken,
Laners and lanerettis lightten to thes endes
Metyn with the maulerdes and many doun striken;
Fawkons thay founden freely to lighte,
With hoo and howghe to the heron thay hitten hym full ofte,
Buffetyn hym, betyn hym, and brynges hym to sege,
And saylen hym full serely and sesyn hym there-aftire.
Then fawkoners full fersely founden tham aftire,
To helpen thaire hawkes thay hyen thaym full yerne,
For the bitt of his bill bitterly he strikes.
They knelyn doun on theire knees and krepyn full lowe . . .
Than henntis thaym one honde and hodes thaym ther-aftire,
Cowples up theire cowers thaire caprons to holde,
Lowppes in thaire lesses thorowe vertwells of silvere;
Than he laches to his luyre, and lokes to his horse,
And lepis upe one the lefte syde, als the laghe askes . . .
Spanyells full spedily thay spryngen abowte,
Be-dagged for dowkynge when digges ben enewede.

The poetry flowers on into a joyous and glowing impression of the courtly order of life as seen through the eyes of Youth—lovely ladies to make love to and dance with, romances to read, singing

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and carolling, playing at chess. It is a variation of the garden of the Rose—or, more exactly, in that other West Midland alliterative poem, Arthur's Court as it is evoked in the opening of *Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight*.

> And than kayre to the courte that I come fro,
> With ladys full lovely to lappyn in myn armes,
> And clyp thaym and kysse thaym and comforthe myn hert;
> And than with damesels dere to daunsen in thaire chambirs;
> Riche Romance to rede, and rekken the sothe
> Of kempes and of conquerours, of kynges full noblee,
> How thay wirchipe and welthe wanne in thaire lyves;
> With renkes in ryotte to revelle in haulle,
> With coundythes and carolles and compaynyes sere,
> And chese me to the chesse that chefe es of gamnes;
> And this es life for to lede while I schalle lyfe here.

It is the life of sensuous and imaginative delight as it might have been lived at a court by a young noble. Youth contrasts such a life with that of anxious, worried Middle-Age, preoccupied with perhaps equally vain things.

> And thou with wandrynge and woo schalte wake for thi gudes,
> And be thou dolven and dede, thi dole schall be schorte,
> And he that thou leste luffes schall layke hym there-with,
> And spend that thou sparede, the devyll spede hym ells!

Middle-Age, in vexation, refuses to continue his debate with Youth.

> Fole es that with foles delys: flyte we no lengare!

It is left to Elde to say the last word; from now on the poem becomes a *Gerontion*, a summing-up of human life as looked back upon by Elde. From his point of view who has been both Youth and Middle-Age, the 'wisdom' of Middle-Age is as foolish as the 'folly' of Youth. Elde goes over again (as is the way of old people) his own past life, his youth and middle age, a summing-up of the whole life of a man that has a universal human application—'makes youre mirrours bi me, men'. For Elde is the only one of the three who has experienced all three conditions.

> While I was yonge in my youthe and yape of my dedys,
> I was als everrous in armes as outher of youre-selven,
> And as styffe in a stourre one my stede bake,
> And as gaye in my gere als any gome ells,
> And as lelly by-luffede with ladyse and maydens.
> My likame was lovely as lothe nowe to schewe,
> And as myche wirchip I wane i-wis as the bothen;
> And aftir irkede me with this, and ese was me levere,
> Als man in his medill elde his makande wolde have.

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Than I mukkede and marlede and made up my howses,
And purcheste me ploughe-londes and pastures full noble;
Gatte gude and golde full gaynly to honde;
Reches and renttes were ryfe to my-selven.
Bot elde undire-yode me are I laste wiste,
And alle disfegurede my face and fadide my hewe,
Bothe my browes and my berde blawnchede full whitte,—
And when he sotted my syghte, than sowed myn hert—
Croked me, cowrbed me, encrampeschet myn hondes,
That I ne may hefe tham to my hede, ne noghte helpe my-selven,
Ne stale stonden one my fete, bot I my staffe have.
Makes youre mirrours bi me, men, bi youre trouthe;
This schadowe in my schewere schunte ye no while.
And now es dethe at my dore that I drede moste;
I ne wot wiche daye, ne when, ne whate tyme he comes.
Ne whedir-wardes, ne whare, ne whatte to do aftire;
But many modyere than I, men one this molde,
Hafe passed the pase that I schall passe sone.

Elde is the mirror which reflects, in this passage with such disturbing vividness, what Youth and Middle-Age will become.[22]

The long account by garrulous Elde of each of the vanished Nine Worthies[23] seem to me decidedly less merit than the rest of the poem, and, even if it is not an interpolation by another hand than the original author's, it interferes with the symmetry of the essential structure of the poem. The Nine Worthies seem to have been popular figures in pageant plays up to Shakespeare's time. Nevertheless, in our poem, they appear as if they had been lifted from one context into another in which they are not perfectly made to belong and are disproportionate.

Elde's concluding note—it is not quite the note of the poem as a whole even in its conclusion—is the melancholy note of the preacher, *vanitas vanitatum*. Life so bright in Youth (and in the

[22]It is essentially the mirror—'ane poleist glass'—in which Cresseid looks in Henryson's *Testament*; the leprosy is surely but an added horror, a sense of pollution, that intensifies the withering of age that is suddenly there in the awful moment of recognition. Pandarus speaks to Criseyde of such a mirror in Book II of Chaucer's *Troilus*.

[23]It is the theme of

Hwer is Paris and Heleyne,
That weren so bryht and feyre on bleo?
Amadas and Ideyne;
Tristram, Yseude, and alle theo?
Ector, with his scharpe meyne;
And Caesar, riche of worldes feo?
Heo beoth iglyden ut of the reyne,
So the scheft is of the cleo.

(From *A Luve Run*; probably early 13th century.)

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lawless hunter whose dream-vision the poem is), the worldly substance that Middle-Age so busily accumulates, indeed all earthly life and its accessories vanish in dust.

> Ne dethe wondes for no witt to wende where hym lykes,
> And thereto paramours and pride puttes he full lowe,
> Ne there es reches ne rent may rawnsone your lyves,
> Ne noghte es sekire to youre-selfe in certayne bot dethe,
> And he es so uncertayne that sodaynly he comes,
> Me thynke the wele of this werlde worthes to noghte . . .
> Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas . . .
> For-thi amendes youre mysse whills ye are men here,
> Quia in inferno nulla est redempcio . . .
> Thou man in thi medill elde, hafe mynde whate I saye!
> I am thi sire and thou my sone, the sothe for to telle,
> And he the sone of thi-selfe, that sittis one the stede,
> For Elde es sire of Midill Elde, and Midill-elde of Youthe:
> And haves gud daye, for now I go; to grave moste me wende;
> Dethe dynges one my dore, I dare no lengare byde.

There is a deep affinity between Elde here and the old man in Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale*.

The dreamer is awakened by a bugle and finds the sun has set. But as he makes his way soberly to 'town' we are reminded again that it was May and that it was among the green leaves that 'thies mirthes me tydde'.

> Als I schurtted me in a schelfe in the schawes faire,
> And belde me in the birches with bewes full smale,
> And lugede me in the leves that lighte were and grene:
> There, dere Drightyne, this daye dele us of thi blysse,
> And Marie, that es mylde qwene, amende us of synn!

The poem is thus, by its sharp recognition of mortality, a correction of Pride. The summer leaves with which the dreamer is environed will wither;[24] autumn and winter will follow; there is no permanence or trust in earthly things. Yet the total wisdom of the poem cannot be said to be exclusively that of Elde, though Elde sums up; for we remember that Elde is envious and wrathful, though rightly sorry for his sins, which include the sins of his Youth and his Middle-Age. We must continue duly to allow for the positive values of life in Youth (so unforgettably presented) and in Middle-Age. These values surely remain, not entirely invalidated, in the total inclusive poem co-present with Elde's last words.

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[24] *Cp.* Yeats—

> Though leaves are many, the root is one;
> Through all the lying days of my youth
> I swayed my leaves and flowers in the sun;
> Now I may wither into the truth.

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V.

The neglect of our mediaeval non-Chaucerian poetry other than Langland's must at least partly be accounted for by the clichés that have reigned for so long in the scholarly text-books and literary histories, in lecture-rooms and examination-halls. There seem to be three main fallacies.

First, there is the dogma that the language of these poems is essentially inferior to Chaucer's—archaic, uncouth, rustic, harsh is how it is commonly characterized. But the vitality and richness of the English of these poems should be apparent; it is a live speech, a full-bodied idiom that far from being a handicap was the sheerest good luck for a skilled poet. It lent itself particularly to majestic, large-scale and dramatic undertakings. It may well be that Chaucer's innovations and improvements in the direction of courtly ease and urban sophistication, which imply changes of attitude as well as differences of language, versification and verse-form, involved also the loss of some things of value—such as the extra-rational and pre-Christian and provincial elements which are implicit in the rich vocabularies of the non-Chaucerian poems. Chaucer was not cut off from the country though he was a townsman, a man of letters and consciously allying himself to the art-poets of France and Italy; but with his sceptical politeness he is almost post-Christian by comparison with the northern and western poets of his century, and he is nearer Pope in many ways than he is to the 14th century alliterative poets and romance writers. What his poetry had gained in concision, grace and urbanity must be set against a loss not so easy to specify.

But the accepted attitude to the non-Chaucerian poems remains much as it was in this innocent summing-up by Gosse on *Sir Gawayne*: 'Unfortunately the language of the poem is exceedingly crabbed and the difficulty of following it is increased by the alliterative metre'. This certainly seems to be Sisam's assumption too in his Introduction to *Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose* where he says, 'The author of *Sir Gawayne* is an artist who never ceases to struggle with a harsh medium'—as though it could have been *that* work of art in any other 'medium'! Even when these poets are praised, it is without recognition of their essential strength. Thus Sisam praises the author of *Sir Gawayne* for having 'the gift of the painter' and discusses the poem as a matter of visual imagery. But the best way to bring out the virtues of this poet would be to compare his poem with *The Faerie Queen*. Yeats's devaluing criticism of Spenser in his essay in *The Cutting of an Agate*, which ends, 'He seemed always to feel through the eyes', is very much to the point here. The language of *Sir Gawayne* uses all the kinds of imagery—tactual, muscular, kinaesthetic, auditory as well as visual, as Shakespeare's does and as Spenser's does not. What a loss Spenser's smoothness of movement, his 'musical' versification, exposes in the comparison with *Sir Gawayne*! In such observations as Gosse's and Sisam's we seem to be listening to an echo of

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the 'Tennyson's fine ear' note on Donne's 'harshness' and 'crabbed metres'. In point of fact the value the alliterative metre can have seems never to have been justly considered, though there are excellent initial hints in *Edda and Saga* and in D. W. Harding's essay on Wyatt in *Scrutiny* (Vol. XIV, No. 2).

Secondly there is an assumption that these poems are deficient in 'art' and cannot be supposed to have a serious meaning. As the scientists say, That hypothesis is the soundest, which accounts for the most facts. The hypothesis that these poems are works of art, and were shaped to communicate a by no means negligible meaning, is borne out at every turn in a critical analysis, once the intention and method of such poems has been apprehended. Then the patronizing attitude to them that is commonly adopted, with its suggestion that they are rather childish, naïve and irresponsible, valuable only for their 'freshness', will be felt to be as impertinent as it is unprofitable.

And thirdly, there is the general agreement that the non-Chaucerian poetry of the fourteenth century has no essential connection with the tradition of modern English poetry, being either a dead end, or a series of 'sports', or (what amounts to the same thing) the products of an unaccountable 'revival.' Thus Mr. Christopher Dawson in *Mediaeval Religion* can write with mystical enthusiasm: 'Langland uses the old alliterative accentual measure which was the native speech of English and Teutonic poetry and which now *suddenly arose, as it were from the dead,* as a sign of the renaissance of the English spirit. . . . Poetry such as this stands entirely outside contemporary literary tradition'.[25] If it does, so much the worse for a 'contemporary literary tradition' that denies so much of its own past and of its own nature. But these alliterative poets were using essentially the same language as Shakespeare and in essentially the same way; and it seems that anyone prepared to deny the essential connection of these poems with the tradition of modern English poetry must be prepared to deny modern English poetry itself the characteristic qualities of English.

JOHN SPEIRS.

[This is the second article in a series by Mr. Speirs revaluing English Mediaeval Poetry. The first, on *Sir Gawayne,* appeared in Vol. XVI, No. 4.]

[25]My italics.

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CORRESPONDENCE:

'SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT' AGAIN

Dear Sirs,

The recent controversy in *Scrutiny* about *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Was Mr. Speirs's critical interpretation of the poem beside the point? Had the poet nothing in mind but an amusing tale of chivalry?) could have been profitably stiffened by citation of Prof. R. S. Loomis's *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance* (1927). Loomis is in no way concerned with literary criticism, nor does he make any total analysis of our poem, but in disentangling the original mythological and ritual bases of the Arthurian romances and showing their development by mediaeval authors he throws out a great mass of evidence that would seem to make Mr. Speirs's case (for a profoundly meaningful reading of the poem) even more convincing. As no space can be spared here for that, I suggest readers in doubt should consult the book themselves; its relevance is quite independent of its much-attacked philological arguments. The Celtic god Curoi was a shape-changer, appearing in many myths and the romances derived from them in two forms, as the hospitable Host, in whose Otherworld castle the testing of the hero takes place, and as a huge outlandish Churl, guardian of the entrance to the Otherworld, who brandishes an axe[1] and challenges the hero to exchange blows. Loomis illustrates the survival in literature of this complex myth which, brilliantly made over into contemporary terms by the author of *Sir Gawain*, has retained nearly every one of the fertility-ritual motifs, showing that Mr. Speirs has read nothing into the poem which was not there for the poet and intended to be there for his audience. Without such a total interpretation as Mr. Speirs has provided there must be a great loss for the reader—like an account of *The Winter's Tale* on merely Bradley lines, or *Anna Karenina* as read by Matthew Arnold. Mr. Speirs might have quoted Grönbech who wrote at the end of his indispensable book on *The Culture of the Teutons*: 'We speak of our critical method as a means to extract the kernel of truth, but our work often consists in peeling off the husk and throwing away the fruit . . . It is interesting, and may sometimes be important, to make out how and when a battle was fought; but it is of still greater consequence to ask what was a battle in those times'. And he goes on to condemn the reading of early literature in translation because 'it leaves out of account the associations which make

[1]A thunder-weapon, and not a fertility-symbol as Mr. Speirs says.

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up the meaning of the words. Every word roots in the experience of the people and draws its force from the harmony of experience that makes up reality; in fact, the word has the culture of its pronouncer at its back and can only be won by a suitor who has acquired the goodwill of the community to which it belongs'.

Loomis following Nutt, Jessie Weston and other workers in the same field, exposes the 'curious fidelity' of the romances like *Sir Gawain* to the original myths, notes how a whole complex pattern of motifs was transmitted entire over long ages, and that 'the minute traits' of Celtic myths 'crop up four or five centuries later' in these romances, which shows that 'the currents of tradition which carried them down must have been extraordinarily uncontaminated'. This can only be where something more than an 'aesthetic' conception of literature prevails; but this superficial conception, lacking a sanction outside the poet himself, with a correspondingly frivolous interest in language, is what Mr. Bayley wishes to attribute to the author of *Sir Gawain*. He tries to discredit Mr. Speirs's interpretation of this poem by classing its author with Chaucer, but we can see that Chaucer had a very different attitude to his work and was in a different relation to his audience. Chaucer, a free artist, primarily an observer, with his civilized amusement and his interest centred in men and women, a poet writing for an urban social order, appears unsophisticated, a 'primitive', only to those who read English literature backwards. His interest in *Troilus* and the *Knight's Tale* is novelistic and the descriptions in these poems are certainly not 'of the same mediaeval order' as those in *Sir Gawain*, as Mr. Bayley asserts. If *Sir Gawain* is also art-poetry it has a dimension and significance, due to being consciously something more, which Chaucer, like Spenser, hasn't. I don't mean I don't value Chaucer very highly (much more highly, of course, than Spenser), only that Chaucer's poetry and *Sir Gawain* are quite different kinds of poetry, which is what Mr. Bayley denies.

The blending of Celtic and Scandinavian elements in the poem is interesting and characteristically English, and I have noted a point which seems not to have been made elsewhere. It is of course a commonplace that the 'Gawain' group of poems are of interest to philologists for the West Norse forms of the northern dialect they exhibit. They are attributed to the north-west counties of England which were settled mostly by Norwegians. Now the Norwegians, according to Miss Phillpotts and Olrik, believed—apparently differing in this from the other Teutonic peoples—that the end of the world was to be brought about by cold, when 'a *fimbulvetr*, a "chief of winters", would hold the earth in its iron grip, and in the darkness and famine and misery of that time all life would disappear' (*The Elder Edda*, B. S. Phillpotts, p. 134). Can we doubt that this myth, taken to England by the Norwegians with their language, is responsible for the ominous ice-bound landscape through which Gawain travels and the unusually pregnant detail of this 'chief of winters'? Like Thor he saves mankind from the frost-giants and brings back the summer; and Miss Phillpotts argues that the Norwegians prob-

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ably performed 'a special type of dramatic representation' on these lines at the Yule festival in order to ensure Thor's success. This explains why events in *Sir Gawain* happen on two successive mid-winters, instead of in May which was the proper time for the seasonal combat and Beheading Game in Celtic folk-ritual and myth.

Q. D. LEAVIS.

MAISIE, MILES AND FLORA, THE JAMESIAN INNOCENTS: A REJOINDER

I doubt if a point-by-point reply to Mr. Leavis's disagreement with me over *What Maisie Knew* and *The Turn of the Screw* would be profitable. I think that a part of our disagreement over these two novels has its origin at levels not readily open to critical persuasion. I shall try and suggest later what I mean by saying this. But I think the 'Disagreement' does provide an unusual opportunity of examining the exact nature of our divergence. Beyond correcting those minor and unavoidable distortions of emphasis with which Mr. Leavis's comments, concerned as they were with advancing his own analysis, have underscored my own essay, the further advantage I see in offering this rejoinder is this: our disagreement occurs, I believe, in an area where the same critical language is spoken, and where one may presume the same critical postulates more or less govern. With this advantage it may be possible to isolate the terms of our difference in a clearer medium than the murky atmosphere of discrepant critical languages and intentions usually allows. To do so will hardly lead us into agreement on these two novels, but I think it may serve to illuminate our respective positions.

Mr. Leavis begins by saying that 'For Mr. Bewley, of the two tales, *The Turn of the Screw* might almost seem to be the major concern'. Mr. Leavis would not, of course, maintain that I make artistic claims for *The Turn of the Screw* comparable to those I make for *Maisie*, although I do esteem it much more highly than he does. But I think the remark ignores the intention of my essay as a whole, which was not at all to present a detailed critique of either novel as such (although an evaluation, it goes without saying, is necessarily everywhere implicit), but to isolate and consider in its effects on James's art a basic preoccupation which, I think, constitutes a radical and recurrent flaw in much of his work. I defined this preoccupation—or call it rather a defect, a tic of the sensibility—as a precarious balance, sometimes disastrously lost,

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between appearance and reality. The preoccupation itself is imperfectly visible *as such* in any given work, and I believe it must be sought out and defined by considering a number of James's works together. Mr. Leavis would call this concern of mine a 'distorting preoccupation', but I believe some of the persuasiveness of his charge arises from the fact that he discusses my analysis of *The Turn of the Screw* quite apart from the central argument in my essay as a whole. This argument does not interest Mr. Leavis, for he is intent on something else; and yet I intended my remarks on *The Turn of the Screw* to mark the culminating point of my discussion of *The Golden Bowl*. While drawing a limited parallel between *The Turn of the Screw* and *Maisie*, I did so for the reason of exhibiting, not their similarity as much as their radical difference: for if the tension which forms the subject of my paper is centred, among all of James's works, in *The Turn of the Screw*, it is precisely *Maisie* from which it is most conspicuously absent. In the light of my subject, *The Turn of the Screw* was indeed my major concern, although it is so much less interesting, and so much smaller, than the other novel. I insist on this point because it is here that I think Mr. Leavis's and my disagreement begins. I believe that he is really questioning the legitimacy of the problem I had undertaken to examine, and is indirectly expressing here his regret that I did not write a different *kind* of essay altogether. I can understand this objection (if I have interpreted it correctly), although I don't agree with it here, and my only complaint is that in excerpting what I had to say about *The Turn of the Screw* from its larger context Mr. Leavis reads my intentions in an extremely limiting perspective.

When I called *The Turn of the Screw* 'appalling' I had in mind something different from the mere Gothic horror which, I believe, Mr. Leavis credits me with. Perhaps I should have used the phrase 'metaphysically appalling' to have been exact, for what I meant was that the dissolution of the ties between appearance and reality which seems to threaten in many of James's stories was here realized with peculiar violence and intensity, and that what it signified was a lack of faith in the grounds of creation, and hence a denial of the possibility of strict moral action. In one guise or another this is a theme of many American writers. Melville wrote a variation on it in *The Confidence Man*, which is not a story of horror in the sense that *The Turn of the Screw* is because the supernatural is nowhere invoked in that novel except ironically, and the intolerable tension between appearance and reality which Melville makes the theme of that novel therefore threatens only the material plane with disintegration and collapse. When in his 'Preface' James called *The Turn of the Screw* an 'excursion into chaos' I am convinced that he did so with complete fulness of meaning. It was under that text from the 'Preface' that I conducted my examination of the story.

At one point in his essay Mr. Leavis says that one part of my interpretation is due to 'an ignorance of English possibilities'. I hope that I am not immodest enough to deny this, and I am grateful to Mr. Leavis for the phrase, for I think that *The Turn of the Screw*

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is peculiarly rich in American possibilities. It was these—the tensions and the frame of mind which I designated as American in my essay—that I undertook to examine. Mr. Leavis expresses his surprise that so many critics have made heavy weather of *The Turn of the Screw*. Most, if not all, of the critics who have done so have been Americans, and this is in itself suggestive to me that the story does indeed contain possibilities that the American may respond to more strongly, and take up more readily than others. As Mr. Leavis points out in his essay, James referred to the story as 'an *amusette* to catch those not easily caught'. Even if I am to take James perfectly literally here, I will not impudently assert that, in that case, I think he was the first to be caught in it; but I do think that he constructed his *'amusette'* out of some of the deepest materials of his experience, as it was the purpose of my essay to suggest. 'It is an excursion into chaos while remaining, like *Blue-Beard* and *Cinderella*, but an anecdote'. I readily conceded the anecdotal ingenuity in my essay, but it was the 'excursion into chaos' that engaged my attention.

There is no object in rehashing here my case for Miles's and Flora's innocence, or for the governess's guilt. It seems to me to have been adequately presented, and to stand in no pressing need of enlargement. But Mr. Leavis makes three points which I should like to comment on here briefly because I think they leave my own position open to some misunderstanding.

First, speaking of my obligations to Mr. Edmund Wilson, Mr. Leavis says: 'From Edmund Wilson he takes over too that remarkable misrepresentation of the "authority" that James, in the "Preface", tells us he has given the governess . . . All he means (as Oliver Evans points out) is that he has invested her with authority for the reader, who will know that he is to trust her implicitly'. I think I can see why Mr. Leavis makes this interpretation of my meaning, although I make no direct mention of the passage in my essay, and am unaware of having referred to it indirectly. But so far from taking up Mr. Wilson's position on the matter, the whole point of my interpretation is that it is the reader with whom the governess has authority. 'The reader and the housekeeper at Bly'. I wrote, 'are equally helpless in her hands'. This may be perversity, but I think it is James's perversity and not mine, and I think James has played the same trick elsewhere. When he collected his stories for the definitive edition he included *The Liar* with *The Turn of the Screw* in the same volume, a fact of some significance. In my essay I tried to show in considerable detail how Oliver Lyon, the painter, who also has complete authority with the reader, uses it to lead the reader up the garden, and so successfully that, as far as I know, no one has ever advanced my own reading that he is the liar after whom the story is named. He has taken himself in completely, of course; but that doesn't, as I tried to show in my analysis, mean that he is innocent. I said that Mrs. Capadose in that story was an early fore-runner of Maggie Verver; but it seems to me no less true to say that Oliver Lyon is an early type of the governess in *The*

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Turn of the Screw. One of my chief concerns was to investigate the nature of the lie in Henry James. It occurs very ambiguously in his work, but I think the intention James is usually aiming at, to put the matter simply, is to depict the very substance of society as so perverted and warped that an apparent lie, in such a context, is often the shortest way to truth, and what looks like truth is often the most egregious lie. The reader trusts the governess implicitly, but that trust is the measure of his participation in what, taking Hawthorne's phrase, I called 'the world's artificial system'. I believe that the effectiveness of *The Turn of the Screw*, its haunting and disturbing quality, arises from the fact that the reader uneasily suspects that he is aiding and abetting the governess in her persecution of the children, and yet her authority with him is real because he is, in his adherence to the world's conventional proprieties, guilty in the same way. This was what I meant when I called *The Turn of the Screw* a destructive foray into the grounds for moral judgment. That the trap James constructed should be of this nature seems to me wholly in accord with the preoccupation I discussed in some of his other works, and to count it anything less hardly seems to me to leave it a trap at all. James said that his values were all blanks, but this seems to me essential to the trick since they must be filled with figures drawing on the pooled resources of the reader and the governess working together. Hawthorne wrote that we could never know how much of the world was 'merely the interpolation of the perverted heart and mind of man', and James's 'blanks' have the effect of taking the ceiling off the possibilities in that direction. While Mr. Leavis and I disagree in believing that James meant this, I do agree that such a meaning is perversity—or in another context, it might even be called arch-heresy.

The second point of Mr. Leavis's I should like to comment on concerns Flora. Mr. Leavis writes: 'As for Flora's depravity, the housekeeper (will Mr. Bewley argue that she is bullied into it?) bears fully explicit testimony to that in her talk with the governess after the scene by the lake'. This is, of course, Mr. Leavis's view of the episode, but his parenthetical question implies a dismissal of my own very full discussion of that scene which, whether one finally agrees with it or not, seems to me to do it less than justice. Mr. Leavis's question really comes to this: How does the governess communicate her guilty knowledge to Flora at the lake's edge? I can only refer back to my discussion of it, which seems to me adequate, but I frankly say that I am unwilling to answer the particular question couched in this way because it seems to me only answerable in terms that are at variance with the mode in which I conceive the story to have been written. But I add that I may be responsible for a misunderstanding here. I have insisted on the innocence of Miles and Flora, but in doing so I have been speaking of their relations with Quint and Miss Jessel. There is no doubt that Flora is at last corrupted (as I hope I made clear)—thoroughly immersed in the governess's guilty vision of life.

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The last particular point I wish to discuss *apropos* of this novel concerns the nature of the ghosts. In my article I quoted from James's 'Preface': '. . . Peter Quint and Miss Jessel are not "ghosts" at all, as we now know the ghost, but goblins, elves, demons as loosely constructed as those of the old trials for witchcraft; if not, more pleasingly, fairies of the legendary order, wooing their victims forth to see them dance under the moon'. I agree with Mr. Leavis that James is explaining here how Quint and Miss Jessel have the function of producing a given effect in *The Turn of the Screw*, but as James has just finished explaining, that effect could not have been achieved with orthodox ghosts. There are, as James points out, many things that 'correct' apparitions don't do. The kind of demon I suggested as a possibility is a conventional and not very odd, member of that 'legendary order' to which James asserts his 'demon-spirits' belong—and his choice of that phrase 'demon-spirits' seems to me conclusive evidence that they aren't, after all, human-spirits, for if James is speaking with any strictness at this point, the two terms ought to be mutually exclusive. James's reference later in the same paragraph to 'the bad dead' does not strike me as persuasive. It is ostensibly *as* 'the bad dead' that the demons make their appearance in the story, and it seems to me the natural way for James to refer to them at this point, which he is the freer to do because he has just finished explaining at some length that they are not 'correct' apparitions—not 'ghosts' at all. And in any case James is explaining when he uses that phrase the limiting conditions that prevail in a work of art when 'the bad dead' are brought back to do more evil. Whether the demon-spirits are the bad dead or not, those limiting conditions would still govern if the story was to be successful unless it was James's intention to show them up as imposters. I think, then, that James is discussing the artistic problem here and not the demon-spirits in their own identities at all. But I also think this discussion is likely to put a false emphasis on my meaning as I expressed it in my article. I am not much concerned about the exact nature of the apparitions. James tells us they are 'evoked', and that is the important thing. The second thing I would insist on is that one cannot make a judgment on the friendship between Miles and Flora and the two living servants on the basis of what we know of the 'ghosts'. I discussed the question because I thought my explanation the likeliest one, but once the two points I have just mentioned are safe-guarded, the larger question that we have been discussing is not strictly relevant to my view of the story. I tried to make this clear in my original remarks, and am sorry if I failed.

I am less concerned here with Mr. Leavis's disagreement with me over *What Maisie Knew*, not because I think it less important, but because it seems to me a more simple and straightforward divergence between our readings than was the case with *The Turn of the Screw*, complicated as that was by being part of a larger argument. First of all, I endorse whole-heartedly Mr. Leavis's assertion that *What Maisie Knew* is a comedy; but I see no conflict

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between this fact and the atmosphere of horror which I believe one encounters in *Maisie*. I cannot abstain from quoting two sentences from an earlier article of mine on James, for they make my position clear. Speaking of another of James's novels, I said: 'To call its comedy "brilliant" would be to insist on the moral illumination that reveals the dimensions of its meaning rather than the mere glitter of surfaces that is usually accepted as justification for that adjective when applied to comedy in the social mode. The shifting dictinction between comedy and tragedy is, perhaps, finally dependent on a radical ambiguity in the nature of moral experience itself, but whatever the explanation, the comic effects that James brings off on his carefully plotted stage frequently seem to be performed on trap-doors opening immediately into subterranean regions of a vastly different character'. There is much beautifully controlled comedy in *Maisie,* but the trap-doors are more yawning there, it seems to me, than in any other of James's novels. But it is exactly against my 'projecting Evil' into *Maisie* that Mr. Leavis vehemently protests. Our contemporary novels specializing in theologically romanticized Evil ('the grandeur of the damned', as a recent American book blurb has it) have not created a prejudice in me in favour of the terms I am obliged to use, but it seems to me that to eliminate evil from Maisie's world is to deprive her of the peculiar grace of her triumph and a good deal of her stature.

I did not analyse the atmosphere of horror I found in *Maisie,* but I did suggest what I thought was the essence of the vibration I detected: '. . . the essence of that horror consists in the way we are able to isolate the *grotesqueness* of moral evil as it caricatures and distorts human action and motive—to isolate it through the innocent eyes of a little girl whose vision is not sufficiently dulled by conventional experience to absorb the singularity of the irregular world in which she lives'. I meant that through Maisie's eyes the characters of her adult world, and their conduct, are frequently reduced to appearances that correspond physically to the moral qualities they embody—and the picture is profoundly disturbing. Mr. Leavis mentions Mrs. Cuddon in his essay, 'the American Countess' who pays Maisie's father to be her lover, and he singles out one passage from Chapter XVIII in which she figures as an example of James's comedy. I agree that it is superb comedy, but if Mrs. Cuddon is kind, she is also a freak of sorts, a kind of Goya grotesque. We first see her at a carnival coming out of a sideshow called the Flowers of the Forest which exhibits on its posters 'a large presentment of bright brown ladies—they were brown all over—in a medium suggestive of tropical luxuriance'. The sideshow is the perfect comment on the nature of the 'romantic' relation between Mrs. Cuddon and her lover, and this note of the extravagant and fantastic, of the perversely debased and demoted, sounds for me throughout all her scenes. Mrs. Cuddon becomes progressively less human in Maisie's eyes: 'She literally struck the child more as an animal than as a "real" lady; she might have been a clever frizzled poodle in a frill or a dreadful human monkey in a spangled petti-

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coat'. What Maisie's rejection of Mrs. Cudden's kindness amounts to is a discriminating rejection of her sordidness—for Maisie's rejection although she herself would not express it so, really comes down to that. Mrs. Cuddon's kindness is impossible for Maisie because it is part of the fabric of a world that Maisie is slowly preparing to cast from her. Mr. Leavis at one point compares Mrs. Cuddon's kindness with that of the Captain. The scene in Kensington Gardens in which Maisie talks with the dashing Captain, her mother's latest lover, impresses me as one of the finest in the book; but for me it also seems one of the most harrowing exposures of childish innocence and goodness to a monstrous selfishness that occurs in literature. The Captain is kind, but the springs of his kindness are contaminated. The source of the atmosphere of horror in this scene isn't, of course, the Captain, although his defection of moral sensibility provides a suitable resonance, but Maisie's mother, Ida, who all during the conversation is quarrelling with Sir Claude in the background. I find it difficult, in view of the achieved rankness she so startlingly embodies, to confine my sense of Maisie's situation within terms of social comedy, however brilliant it may be. The essence of Mr. Leavis's and my disagreement is this: that for me the comedy still has something of the infernal about it. I am reluctant to mention a masterpiece like *Maisie* in the same breath with Sartre's *Huis Clos*, and yet the men and women who people Maisie's adult world, parasitically feeding on each other's vices, and trapped in each other's orbits, generate for me that kind of atmosphere with an intensity immeasurably beyond anything in Sartre's range. I think that if one denies evil in this novel one will be depriving Maisie's triumphant escape of a good deal of its significance. As Mr. Leavis reads the novel, Maisie's escape is a chance to enter adolescence under respectable tutelage. I agree that is important, although I am less sanguine about the possibilities with Mrs. Wix than he. The benefits as far as she is concerned seem to me entirely negative at best. Maisie's escape also exists, I think, at a more important level. She has literally saved herself spiritually, and it has been all her own doing with the exception, perhaps, of some help from Sir Claude. As I read it, the pathos of *Maisie* does not exist *only* in the little girl's situation, although it is, of course, centred there. It seems to me there is a subtle and profound sympathy and understanding between the young man and the child that has meaning only because the danger that confronts Maisie (making due allowance for the differences in their ages and roles) is the same danger that Sir Claude does *not* escape. It is, I think, this instinctive sympathy arising so largely from their shared 'danger' which explains Sir Claude's remarkable attachment for Maisie—and this is something quite different from the 'overbearing maternal, or paternal, passion' with which Mr. Leavis believes I endow Sir Claude. Unless evil is a permitted term, this 'danger' (upon the existence of which I do not wish to imply Mr. Leavis and I would agree) is unintelligible. As I see it, the impressiveness, as well as the deeply moving poignancy, of the closing pages of the

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novel, is heightened by the fact that if Maisie is saved, Sir Claude is (if I may use a charged word) lost. Maisie's last 'Good-bye' to Sir Claude seems to me to confirm this interpretation of their relationship:

> 'Sir Claude had reached the other door and opened it. Mrs. Wix was already out. On the threshold Maisie paused; she put out her hand to her step-father. He took it and held it a moment, and their eyes met as the eyes of those who have done for each other what they can. "Good-bye", he repeated.
> ' "Good-bye". And Maisie followed Mrs. Wix'.

Before concluding I wish to make a comment on my remark that Maisie lies. Mr. Leavis is in a strategic position here, for he denies my earlier point that Miles and Flora did not lie nor practise cunning and deceit in any culpable way. Since I had discussed the ambiguous nature of the lie in James's work, I felt free to suggest, as a way of stating the essential innocence of all three children, that Maisie lied *as much* as Miles and Flora. Naturally if one believes in the guilt of Miles and Flora my statement requires revision, but in its context I think it is clear.

To sum up, then, my attitude to *Maisie*: the adult characters of Maisie's world seem to me unmistakenly a horrible set of people, far beyond any conventional late-Victorian or Edwardian 'fast set'; and their viciousness does not seem to me to reside as much in their overt physical acts as in a subtly communicated taint of the spirit—an exuded corruption which I strongly sense in every part of the novel. I believe that comedy frequently absorbs the shock of merely physical or carnal evil. That is said to be the peculiar strength of Restoration Comedy, to cite a familiar example. But the comedy of *Maisie* seems to me much nearer to *Volpone*—and if Jonson's dance of the hermaphrodite, the dwarf, and the eunuch, is comedy, it is also horror. For me the comedy and the horror of *Maisie* is closely akin to that.

In the beginning of these remarks I expressed my belief that our disagreement over these novels had its origin in areas not readily open to literary-critical persuasion. I believe I may now define these areas as: (1) the relationship between James's sensibility and the idea (so deceptively abstract in sound when formally stated) which made the central theme of my paper; (2) the meaning and function of evil in *Maisie*; (3) as a consequence of that, the meaning and significance of the atmosphere of horror. These three items are, as I see it, intrinsically related, and although the last two appear to be primarily critical considerations, I think that the way one senses their presence in the novels may be partly due to one's conception of them *outside* the novels. I would agree, I hope it goes without saying, that these terms can have significance in *The Turn of the Screw* and *What Maisie Knew* only inasfar as they are validated by the actual texts themselves; but I think the cross-reference works in both directions simultaneously. It would of course be Mr. Leavis's point that I have not sufficiently disciplined

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the cross-references between my values and the novels—that I have allowed the former to make some egregious contributions of their own. I do not see it myself, but if it is so I believe it will be the more apparent for having tried to clear away some of the hidden treacherous roots that are always concealed in such disagreements, even when mutual understanding is not jeopardized by an initial conflict in critical language and conceptions.

MARIUS BEWLEY.

All James means (doesn't the whole context of the Preface make it plain?) by calling *The Turn of the Screw* an 'excursion into chaos' is that 'this piece of ingenuity pure and simple' is a creation won from the void and formless infinite: he is stressing the extreme freedom of improvization that constitutes the trap or difficulty of the 'fairytale' for a serious artist. The apparitions are 'not "ghosts" at all, as we now know the ghost'—in these days of 'psychical research', with the pointless trivialities it deals in: 'I had to renounce all attempts to keep the kind and degree of impression I wished to produce on terms with the to-day so copious psychical record of cases of apparitions'. I cannot see why Mr. Bewley should suppose that by 'evoked predatory creatures' (see Preface p. XXIII) James can mean anything but that they are evoked by the calculating author. As for the governess's 'authority', I contended—and contend—that James clearly means by it, not that she has the power of making the reader, or the housekeeper, 'helpless', but that we are to accept her in unquestioning good faith as a wholly credible witness—a final authority.

Maisie's 'discriminating rejection of Mrs. Cuddon's sordidness'?

> ' "Your father's temptress?" Mrs. Wix gave her a sidelong squint.
>
> "Perfectly. She pays him!"
>
> "Oh *does* she?" At this the child's countenance fell: it seemed to give a reason for papa's behaviour and place it in a more favourable light. She wished to be just. "I don't say she's not generous. She was so to me".'

But I must not take up the argument again. I find no 'horror' in *What Maisie Knew* and nothing 'metaphysically appalling' in *The Turn of the Screw*: Mr. Bewley and I have not shaken one another. We must submit the case to others.

F.R.L.

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COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

WHAT OFT WAS THOUGHT . . .

THE MEANING OF BEAUTY, by Eric Newton (Longmans, 15/-).

AESTHETICS AND HISTORY, by Bernard Berenson (Constable, 15/-).

Mr. Newton has written a good book about art which is to be strongly recommended to all who are seriously interested in painting, which the book is primarily about, and especially to those engaged in teaching. The method of the book, by which we gradually penetrate to, or as near as possible to, the title and in which every statement of importance is supported by an illustration, is admirable and it was a happy thought to make the reproduction of the chief example an end paper which can be opened out whenever it is required. A thorough, but at the same time discriminating, study of the book would form a most valuable educational exercise. For it is unfortunate that Mr. Newton, with his deep sensitivity to visual experience and his searching powers of thought about what he sees, often lets his enthusiasm express itself in journalistic and not very apposite analogies. He seems too anxious to avoid both preciosity and aridity and the result is in places a popular lecturer's heartiness. Mr. Newton chooses to enliven his chapter on the analysable elements of a work of art by two of these analogies; first he compares the artist's selection of material from his experience to the stringing of pearls from an oyster bed, and then, admitting that this won't do, he goes on to compare a picture to an onion; finally he states that, of course, not merely are the layers, or elements of a picture, not separate but they interpenetrate each other completely so that the beholder is conscious of them all simultaneously. The idea is not good enough to be written down.

Mr. Newton is perhaps fortunate in coming at the end of a longish period of extremely eclectic taste and being able in consequence to take a broad view of his theme—he, however, writes very well on the importance of habit and tradition on the production and the appreciation of works of art. He has behind him the believers in empathy and in significant form and the neo-Thomists, and he is able to make use of their contribution and produce a balanced and comprehensive study; he has no dealings with Vico or the 'innocent eye' and is convinced that art is a serious and intellectual activity. It would have been unusual to use his title for a book on art before the war. Mr. Herbert Read, in *The Meaning of Art*, denied the identity of art and beauty, unless the latter were defined in the vaguest way as harmony. Mr. Newton, in the first version of his

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book, *European Painting and Sculpture*, fought shy of the term. He now feels far enough away from classical and neo-classical associations to use it once more to describe a completely harmonious and satisfying picture:

> 'Beauty in art is a product of man's love of, based on his intuitive understanding of, the mathematics of Nature' (p. 27).

The chapter on *Nature* need not detain us here, though it is a link in the original argument. The chapter on *Art* lays down fundamentals of analysis: the subject, since most pictures are representational, the treatment of the subject, the artist's general view of life as shown in the particular picture, the aesthetic or formal aspect, the concrete embodiment in paint on a surface. The short chapter on *The Medium* outlining the two-way traffic between hand and head and the surprising new developments in art which have followed the discovery of a new technique—whether as a consequence or not cannot be known—is very suggestive and clears up several misconceptions.

But it is the fundamental problem of formal values that naturally arouses the most thought. Sometimes Mr. Newton locates beauty here, sometimes in the total effect. It is necessary to examine his arguments with attention. These centre round his detailed and, on the whole, excellent analytic description of Veronese's *Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine*, which forms the core of the book. Here he shows how description of representational aspects blends almost imperceptibly into description of formal aspects, for 'beauty is an amalgam of every possible type of human experience built round a central visual scaffolding'. He relates Veronese carefully, and with none of the irrelevant kind of sociological references which often get into this sort of expanded account, to the whole Venetian and Giorgionesque traditions. I am embarrassed by his comparison of the effects of Titian's and Veronese's pictures to Chartres and Rheims cathedrals respectively; such things are pointless or vicious unless they can be substantiated in detail, which they obviously cannot. But certain other points could, I think, be explained rationally. I have an awkward feeling that 'beauty' is being used rather imprecisely and that the ambiguity mentioned earlier is never really sorted out, when we are told, first, that

> 'As a piece of complex geometry Veronese's *St. Catherine* is just as firmly constructed and even a little more ingenious than Titian's *Pesaro Madonna*, but as an amalgam of human experience translated into paint, it is less rich and less satisfying. There is no other short way of expressing this difference between the two paintings than by saying that Veronese's is "less beautiful".' (p. 112).

suggesting that 'beauty' indeed lies in an amalgam of all the elements of a picture, and, later, that the sublimest works of the aged Titian or of el Greco or Michelangelo are somehow less deserving of the

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epithet 'beautiful' than Veronese—Mr. Newton first uses the word and then appears to take it away—because

> 'moods of violence and unease can find a completely satisfying expression in terms of form, but never quite in terms of colour, and the perfect amalgam can never therefore be attained. (p. 133) "Beauty" in the strictest sense is only attainable when the fusion between colour and form is complete'. (p. 134)

To the problem as to whether 'beauty' lies in the total effect of a picture or in its formal values this last quotation adds the idea of 'beauty' as an absolute and therefore rarely usable critical term. Previously it seemed to be a flexible term of which there might be several degrees.

Further on in the comparison between Veronese and Titian already quoted from, Mr. Newton writes:

> 'The deeper aesthetic levels can exist by themselves, but the upper human ones cannot function effectively without support from below. The amalgam can only become richer in proportion to the fineness and strength of the framework'. (p. 112)

This would seem to conflict with the previous passage which suggests that the human elements embodied on the framework have a preponderating value in the whole, and it also quite flatly conflicts with the following statement about the levels or aspects of a work of art:

> 'Each level is conditioned by the one above it: each owes its meaning, and in fact its very existence, to the one above it'. (p. 172)

—the formal values, on this page being simply called 'beauty', are the deepest level except for 'handwriting' or technique in the widest sense. I feel that to resolve these contradictions requires more goodwill than an author can fairly expect from his readers.

Mr. Newton clinches his discussion of the relation of form and content by a comparison of Bronzino's *Bartolomeo Panciatichi* and Rubens' *Dr. van Thulden*, ending thus:

> 'Now, the difference between the two portraits is not, fundamentally, the difference between two geometrical systems into which the image of a human being has been poured as a jelly is poured into a mould. It is rather the difference between two ways of looking at mankind. Both portraits are a species of metaphor. To say of a man that he is "upright" is to express a psychological conception in geometrical terms. The form arises out of the content. It is itself a metaphor derived from content . . .' (p. 189)

I should suspect this of being critical sleight-of-hand if the main preceding arguments did not lead up to it, but the simple case relates back to the more complex. Mr. Newton's answers to the Philistine and to Aesthetic Man, the artistic puritan, follow from this. The first asks too much, asks what only the most comprehensive

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genius can give in terms of human associations, though I doubt if he will often admit that Rubens is what he is really looking for. The puritan, Roger Fry at his narrowest, deceives himself by believing that art is a pure essence; Plato's belief that it was possible to free contemplation from the itch of desire by contemplating lines and circles is untenable. He sums up:

> 'What finally counts in the weight of beauty that a given work of art can sustain is its capacity to bear the burden of human experience, as a skeleton, meagre in itself, can sustain muscles and nerves, vital organs and skin'. (p. 202)

Once again an analogy which is effective if not examined too closely.

Mr. Newton has attempted an immensely difficult task. He is not an aesthetician or a logician, but he has sufficient theoretical equipment. It is his aim, and his achievement, to keep in close touch with the concrete throughout his study. He provokes the reader to refer to his illustrations constantly and to make further comparisons. He has made a synthesis of a mass of ideas which many of us have been turning over in our minds for several years, and, if at certain points the argument lacks clarity, this is mainly because he finds pictures to be complex rather than simple—or over-simplified—objects. For his writing the book and giving one the opportunity to argue with him one must be sincerely grateful.

Mr. Berenson would simply designate the taste of the modern Aesthetic Man barbarous or decadent according to whether he admired the art of negro Africa or Melanesia or the European derivatives from them. As perhaps one should expect from one of the greatest of Italian Renaissance scholars, his belief in the superiority of the typical art forms of Greece and the Western Mediterranean countries is fanatical and his confidence in the values of Humanist and liberal civilization of the uncritical intensity we have come to associate with the older generation of Transatlantic immigrants. A parallel civilization, such as the Chinese, he merely recognizes and ignores. All works of art produced at any distance from Greece in Antiquity, France in the Middle Ages and Italy, especially Florence, during the Renaissance, he regards as incompetent, if perhaps interesting and original. His appreciation of painting reaches a little uneasily down to Cézanne. Clearly Mr. Berenson is very much a man of his times.

His book is in no way a systematic study. It is a surprising mixture of notes on art criticism and history and all manner of lucubrations on vaguely related themes, artistic and social, sometimes trivialities of dress and fashion, sometimes interesting points such as that on the usefulness of photographs in the detailed study of a picture, or on the unsatisfactoriness of representations of violent emotion, especially tragic, except in certain German and Spanish works. It is the wealthy connoisseur looking back and reflecting—there sometimes seems to be something suspicious in his insistence on competence of execution, but I am inclined to think it is a genuine artistic principle.

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The critical chapters contain reflections on the art experience of a lifetime, and restatements of ideas which he has long entertained:

> 'It has been my life's work to "live" the work of art, to turn it over and over on my mental palate, to brood, to dream over it . . .'

In theory this seems to be the best possible approach, but a great deal depends on how it works out in practice. The insistence on the separation of form and content in discussion can be passed over, but the terms 'decoration' and 'illustration' have misleading implications. His conception of the concrete and organic nature of a work of art is expressed by the terms 'tactile values' and movement, which distinguish it from what he calls a mere artifact. and which alone can give those ideated sensations which are life-enhancing. These

> 'exist only in the imagination, and are produced by the capacity of the object to make us realize its entity and live its life. In the visual arts this capacity is manifested primarily and fundamentally through the variety of imagined sensations of contact and their multiple implications . . . (p. 64)

> 'To be life-enhancing, visible things . . . must be presented in a way to make us feel that we are perceiving them more quickly, grasping them more deeply than we do ordinarily. The instantaneous result is an illusion of unwonted and unexpected ease of functioning, and its inseparable accompaniment the sense of heightened vitality . . .' (p. 59)

Here we have the nature and effects of 'decoration', the sum of the formal qualities of a work. It is a curious puritanical hedonism which thus professes to cut off all ordinary associations in the act of appreciation and yet insists on an imaginative self-identification by the beholder with the work of art as the tactile values and the inner vitality of movement make themselves felt. The following reduces the whole thing to very naïve self-glorification:

> 'The nude then is already an art creation, begotten and gestated by the need of providing shapes with which we can most easily identify ourselves: shapes like our own, but freed from blemishes, flatteringly proportioned and moving freely'. (p. 81)

But, of course, Mr. Berenson's most consistently expounded view is that

> 'the ideated sensations that constitute a work or art belong to a realm apart, a realm beyond actuality where the ideal is the only reality . . . where nothing can happen except to the soul of the spectator, and nothing that is not tempering and refining'. (p. 66)

A more fundamentally unsatisfactory feature of Mr. Berenson's aesthetic should now be apparent. Most of it is concerned more

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with the effects of the work of art on the spectator than with the works themselves, let alone any one work, for he does not illustrate and tends to refer to an artist's works as a whole. In consequence, while obviously the importance of material and technique has been exaggerated by certain recent movements as part of their programmes, he unduly depreciates it, and simply begs the question when he says, for example, that Bellini's small uniform brush strokes demand no attention. He instances Roger Fry as excessively interested in material. There are of course strong similarities between their basic ideas. Fry developed a far more puritanical conception of the formal qualities of art in his idea of plasticity and held very narrow views of subject matter, but he did submit himself humbly and sincerely to the experience which each work of art offered, or at least to his limited view of that experience. For Mr. Berenson the world of ideated sensation is a dream world for a chosen few where they 'can dance and sing within [them]selves'. He does not try to eliminate content or 'illustration', as Fry did, he finds it as essential to art as 'quality or touch', but it merely helps to create the dream world of refined, and undefined, emotional indulgence, and he seems to see no other way than his own of looking at a picture, except as a piece of visual information. He does not suggest that a picture might be a controlled and organized visual experience, more difficult to say anything about, let alone describe, the more complex it is, but nevertheless not a mere exquisite mystery. His list of artists who have produced works having the supreme spiritual values includes van Dyck and Reynolds and descends to Raeburn, David and Watts.

Mr. Berenson's conception of art history is far more rigorous, and indeed rather narrow. He wants to see it deal with the successive solutions of the problems of expression by the principal European masters; he would rule out subsidiary schools and any painters who have not contributed to the main development, however great—Rembrandt and el Greco would apparently be out. This all seems the opposite of the freedom and irresponsibility which he has celebrated earlier. On the other hand his conception of artistic personalities as embracing particular modes of vision as a subject for study rather than the endless pursuit of individual attributions seems a valuable way of organizing the history of art, provided that it does not blur the edge of critical discrimination and lead to the mere grouping of similar types of dream visions, which Mr. Berenson's manner at certain points seems to suggest.

One could continue picking out aperçus and querying other passages. The book provides plenty of intellectual stimulus as well as exasperation. The one thing it does not provide is sustained reasoning on any theme. One comes to the conclusion that Mr. Berenson's aesthetics amount to a series of conceptions, some profound, some rather superficial, all interesting and worth consideration, but not calculated to promote disinterested and disciplined understanding and appreciation of pictures.

GEOFFREY WALTON.

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VICTORIAN JOURNALISM

THE STORY OF THE PALL MALL GAZETTE by J. W. Robertson Scott (Cumberlege, O.U.P. 25/-).

The list of books on Victorian journalism grows steadily longer. They tend to fall into two main classes: the scholarly study, usually combining a general history of the periodical with a detailed examination of its work over a strictly limited period, and the more general account in terms of biography, memoirs and the personal reminiscences of the author. The first type has come mainly from America, in such works as G. L. Nesbitt's *Benthamite Reviewing*, Miriam H. Thrall's *Rebellious Frasers*, M. M. Bevington's *The Saturday Review*, L. A. Marchand's *The Athenaeum*, and E. M. Everett's *The Party of Humanity* (on *The Fortnightly*). The second may be represented by Sir William Beach Thomas's *The Story of the Spectator*, and it is to this class that the present book belongs. As the publishers point out, however, it has a much more comprehensive scope, being also 'a period book, in its picture of Victorian social life' and 'the portrait of two outstanding personalities', George Murray Smith, the *Pall Mall's* founder and owner and Frederick Greenwood, its first editor. There is a great deal of gossip and reminiscence, of purely biographical matter, and of political discussion, especially concerning the purchase of the Suez Canal shares, and the Boer War. It would be perhaps ungracious to complain that in pouring out his memories at the age of eighty-three, and his store of miscellaneous information, Mr. Robertson Scott has been too profuse and discursive. He can justly claim that as the oldest survivor of the editorial staff of the *Pall Mall* his reminiscences are 'a contribution to literary, journalistic, social and political history'. The result, however, is to make the book leisurely to the point of rambling; one to consult on specific points rather than to read through. Fortunately there is a good index.

Of the sections not specifically concerned with periodicals the most interesting from a literary point of view are those dealing with Victorian publishing. Smith and Elder published works by Charlotte Brontë, Thackeray, Ruskin, the Brownings, Trollope, Arnold and Mrs. Humphrey Ward, among others; and George Smith's undertaking the production of the *Dictionary of National Biography* shows the sense of responsibility which governed his work: he had 'got his mind on making a munificent contribution to the literature of his country' which would 'surpass works of a similar character produced abroad with State aid or other subsidy'.

One of Smith's earlier ventures was the foundation of the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1860. Two chapters discuss its first two years with Thackeray as editor, and a further one deals rather summarily with the rest of its history. One would have liked more about the period of Leslie Stephen's editorship (1871 to 1882). The immediate success of the magazine is staggering by present day

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standards: the first number sold 110,000 copies and as a result Smith doubled the editor's salary. This circulation could hardly be maintained: when Stephen took over it was 'not a fifth of that of the initial number', and when he left it was 12,000, but this is still a respectable figure for a periodical whose 'soul' was described by Sir Edward Cook as 'the spirit of humane culture'. It published most of *Culture and Anarchy*, part of *Friendship's Garland* and *Literature and Dogma*, several of the *Hours in a Library* essays, and three instalments of *Unto this Last* (before Thackeray had to yield to public opinion and cut the series short). Its serialized novels included not only works by Wilkie Collins and Charles Reade, but four by Trollope, George Eliot's *Romola* (for which she received £7,500) and Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* (Stephen felt obliged to decline *The Return of the Native*). Other contributors included Henry James as well as J. A. Symonds and R. L. Stevenson.

Some half-dozen chapters of the book deal with the strict theme of its title. Smith's successful venture into daily journalism, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, started in 1865. Its circulation was at first under 4,000, and soon dropped to 613, but Smith persisted through a difficult year until it began to pay its way. At its most successful it can hardly have brought the owner any substantial profit, but he was more concerned with the influence it gave him, as a paper written (like the prototype in *Pendennis*) 'by gentlemen for gentlemen'. It appealed to 'those who disliked the vulgarity, as they considered it, of the *Daily Telegraph*, and the stiffness of the *Standard*'. Mr. Robertson Scott draws some of the obvious contrasts with modern journalism, though it can hardly be said that he brings out strongly enough their cultural significance. Smith's attitude in the matter of reviewing is typical: he would not allow any books published by Smith and Elder to be reviewed in the *Pall Mall* at all. The editor, Frederick Greenwood, seems to have aimed at introducing into daily journalism the combination of scholarship, lively independent thought and vigorous style of the *Sunday Review* established ten years earlier. To some extent the contributors to the two journals overlapped: the *Pall Mall's* list included Lewes, Arnold (the bulk of *Friendship's Garland*), Fitzjames and Leslie Stephen, R. H. Hutton, Meredith Townsend, Trollope, Ruskin, Meredith, and John Morley, who later became editor. But, anonymity being the rule, there was no question of succeeding through the lure of famous names; it all had to be done through the quality of the writing. That there was a public to support, as well as a publisher, editor and contributors concerned to produce journalism of this quality, is an important fact about the mid-Victorian literary world: one can see why Arnold did not need to despair altogether of re-vivifying a tradition.

This book does not pursue the story of the *Pall Mall Gazette* beyond 1880, when Smith's gift of the paper to his son-in-law produced a change of political attitude and the resignation of Greenwood. A later volume may deal with the three years under

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Morley and the seven years under Stead (by all accounts a very different type of journalist) when Mr. Robertson Scott was himself a member of the staff. The section on Greenwood's last editorships includes two chapters on the *St. James's Gazette*, in which he aimed at carrying on the earlier *Pall Mall* tradition until his resignation in 1888; and one on *The Anti-Jacobite*, a weekly which lasted for only seven years in the 'nineties.

R. G. Cox.

SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY: PAST AND PRESENT

The Marett Lecture, 1950. *MAN*. Vol. L. September, 1950.

I do not wish to discuss the repercussions that the publication of Professor Evans-Pritchard's Marett Lecture will have within the subject itself but rather to draw the attention of *Scrutiny* readers to a valuable statement that they might otherwise have missed.

It is unfortunately very clear that the word 'anthropology' means a great deal of nothing to the reading public. Few people are very clear about the exact field of its enquiries and usually lump myths, quaint habits, bones and beadwork under the general heading. This is in no way culpable since quite apart from the usual 'lag' there has been a general lack of direction within the subject. The relation of social science to natural science and of both to the humanities, the independence of anthropology and its affiliations with other branches of knowledge are questions which constantly arise.

In his lecture Professor Evans-Pritchard notes the present situation and sets out a brief history of anthropological theory since its eighteenth century origins in France and England when it appeared as a 'child of the Enlightenment'. He traces what appears to be the significant line of development and then goes on to assess present theory in terms of its history and potentiality.

This is really the first modern statement of the orientation of social anthropology both towards the past and the future and is a far better introduction to the subject than an uncritical plunge or dip into the mess of ethnographic literature.

D. F. Pocock.

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SYMPOSIUM ON MR. ELIOT'S 'NOTES' (III)[1]

Mr. Eliot introduces his *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* by citing the Oxford English Dictionary as follows:

> Definition I. The setting of bounds; limitation (rare)—1483.

One could, I think, put forward the theory that the second meaning is co-present with the first in the author's intention. One has at times the impression while reading this book that the intention is quite the reverse of Matthew Arnold's which was:

> 'to try and inquire . . . what culture really is, what good it can do, . . . I shall seek to find some plain grounds upon which a faith in culture . . . may rest securely.'[2]

One of the many impressions the book leaves is that of its sterility. It is as though Eliot were saying in a rather devious manner 'we are an uncultured and rotten society and there's nothing we can do about it'. From a rather more overt theological position perhaps, he might have followed this up and at least achieved the title of 'elegant Jeremiah'. This, however, he either could not or would not do.

I have said that this is one of the impressions because it is difficult to assess Eliot's attitude throughout. It is in fact the major difficulty that confronts anyone trying to write about his later prose works, to discover just how seriously Eliot takes himself or intends to be taken. *The Cocktail Party* is printed rather differently, but it can be included here for the sake of convenience. Of late one or two articles or features have come out with the tone 'T. S. Eliot is not only a poet but also . . . ' and from *Time*[3] we learn:

> 'He loves practical jokes. For years Eliot patronized a small store which specialized in exploding cigars, squirting buttonholes and soapy chocolates'.

This sort of humour gives us the clue to the wilful bad taste of 'The reader should therefore abstain from deriding . . . the late regretted Miss Wilkinson' as to the sub-title of *The Cocktail Party* and also, I think, to much more. Mr. Eliot appears to have written off the world as one of his own bad jokes but such an attitude being in fact impossible we find a resulting negative quality in his later prose that one is tempted to call Swiftian.

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[1]Previous contributions appeared in Vol. XVI, No. 1 and Vol. XVII, No. 1.
[2]*Culture and Anarchy*. Introduction.
[3]*Time*, March 6th, 1950.

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No reviewer has, in my opinion, been able to talk about *Notes towards* without selecting particular subjects for discussion. This is, in itself, a major criticism since if anything at all positive is to emerge, such a selection is inevitable. The standards that are assumed for the purpose of one page of argument are explicitly rejected on the next or even by implication in the argument itself. We may cite as an example the treatment of Dr. C. E. M. Joad. The choice of Joad's views on education for what purports to be a serious discussion is itself a matter for wonder, but leaving that aside, the treatment is interesting.

To start with[4] Dr. Joad is praised with what appears to be mock solemnity for maintaining the platitude that 'education has a number of ends!' Joad's propositions are then listed but it is found that while they all contain some truth 'each of them needs to be corrected by the others, it is possible that they all need to be adjusted to other purposes as well'. The propositions are in fact found to be pretty vapid and one is left wondering why they were considered in the first place. The criticism of them produces no alternatives except learning, knowledge and wisdom and by this point in the book one wants to know badly what Mr. Eliot means by the last term or how he would answer the question 'What shall we learn or teach?'. Finally, Dr. Joad is discovered in a Winchester garden. Dr. Joad's reaction to the scene and his subsequent reveries upon his life at Oxford are sufficiently caricatured for us to be aware of his limitations and also of the limitations of the life he admires. We are not then prepared for what follows:

> 'It seems strange, after these wistful reflections, that Dr. Joad should end his chapter by supporting a proposal . . . that the public schools should be taken over by the State and used as boarding schools to accommodate for two or three years, the intellectually abler secondary schoolboys . . . For the conditions over which he pronounces such a tearful valedictory were not brought about by equality of opportunity. They were not brought about either by mere privilege; but by the happy combination of privilege and opportunity, in the *blend* he so savours of which no Education Act will ever find the secret'.

We are left then to suppose that insofar as anything is meant by this 'blend' it is just the Thackeray-like romance which has previously been so adequately dealt with.

Mr. Eliot is in the habit of writing carefully and we cannot forget this when a habit so usefully employed before has now turned, apparently, vicious. This is the same sort of negative attitude revealed in the Milton lecture where the one or two tellingly adverse critical points, introduced by 'It might be said . . . ', were not allowed to affect the main argument and in the published version relegated to foot-note status.

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[4]Pages 97-8 and 101-2.

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Apart, however, from these objections to manner and tone, why is it that the book fails to arouse any interest in those who are actively engaged in the study of society? Why, on the other hand does Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* remain the far more readable book? When we read Arnold we are not forced to be aware of the standards of the specialized disciplines upon whose field he touches. There is a reasonable degree of assumption disciplined by close attention to the subject at hand. As T. S. Eliot put it in his essay on Arnold and Pater:

> 'His (Arnold's) Culture survives better than his Conduct because it can better survive vagueness of definition . . . Culture has three aspects according as we look at it in *Culture and Anarchy*, in *Essays in Criticism*, or in the abstract. It is in the first of these two books that Culture shows to the best advantage. And the reason is clear: Culture there stands out against a background to which it is contrasted, a background of definite items of ignorance, vulgarity and prejudice . . . the book is perfect of its kind'.[5]

It does not at all affect our appreciation of Arnold's book that he should define culture in his Preface as:

> 'A pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know on all matters which most concern us the best which has been thought and said in the world'.

We read and pass on to his particular discussions for he has no pretensions to the scientific attitude or to its logic. On the other hand there are books which set out to arrive at conclusions about society in what is called a scientific spirit. Mr. Eliot has contrived to fall between these two. By professing to speak as a 'social biologist' and by his gesture to Mannheim who is not, after all, one of the least vulnerable figures in twentieth-century sociology, he makes us constantly aware of his own inadequacies and unawareness of the complexity of the problems he discusses. The specialist reader finding himself approached as such, is not prepared to pass over the loose judgments in which the book abounds. Especially is this the case where a preliminary analysis is being conducted and where the author is constantly claiming to make no such evaluations. We may consider a representative passage:

> 'I have suggested elsewhere that a society is in danger of disintegration when there is a lack of contact between people of different areas of activity—between the political, the scientific, the artistic, the philosophical and the religious minds. . . . The élite should be something different, something much more organically composed than a panel of bonzes, caciques and tycoons'.[6]

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[5] *Selected Essays*, second edition, page 394.
[6] Page 84-5.

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This, offered as a *true* generalization about society is quite inadequate. Whatever Mr. Eliot may mean by bonze, it is an evaluative term which has no place in an objective analysis. Does 'organic' here mean anything more than integrated? If not, all that is said is that when a society is disintegrated, it shouldn't be. Apart from this we must expect from a 'social biologist' a clearer definition than any social scientist has yet attempted of the word 'integration'.

Throughout the book there are many observations about our present condition, with which many people would agree. The agreement would not rest, however, upon any demonstrable scientific principle but upon the implicit value judgments associated with the words he uses.

The point arising here concerns the audience for which the book is intended. If Eliot is writing for those who agree with him substantially that there is something wrong with our society, then he has told them nothing new nor has he done anything that has not already been done so much better in his poetry. If on the other hand, and this I believe is the truth of the matter, he imagines himself to be addressing politicians, theologians, sociologists and students of education, the book defeats itself. The inadequacy of the scholarship prevents such readers from taking the book seriously and hence weakens the impact of those observations which are worth serious consideration.

It is difficult to associate this later Eliot with the author of the earlier critical essays. As we look through them now we can find many of the points considered in the present book dealt with far more succintly and with an artist's interest and perceptiveness. Whether he was dealing with Marvell's intellectual background[7] or trying to account for the thinness of Puritan mythology in Milton and Blake[8] he gave an adequate account which furthermore provides valuable openings for the student of society. *Notes towards* gives no openings. It can only be of interest to those whose hopes were based upon Eliot's earlier promises.

> Consequently I rejoice, having to construct something
> Upon which to rejoice.

Now it seems that the earlier promise of faith has degenerated into wilful hopelessness which can only appear as a subtle complacency; for the sympathetic, a source of bewilderment.

D. F. Pocock.

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[7] *Selected Essays*, second edition, page 294.

[8] *ibid*, page 321.

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WHO ARE THE ENGLISH BAROQUE POETS?

POETRY AND HUMANISM, by M. M. Mahood (*Cape*, 16/-).

Miss Mahood might well have called her book *Poetry and l'Humanisme intégral*, for she relies heavily on M. Maritain's principal exposition of his beliefs as a basis for her arguments. I have always found that book the least satisfactory of his more general works because of its turgidity (though perhaps this is the fault of the translator) and the enormous gaps between the various concepts he discusses and the actualities, historical and contemporary, which they are intended to sum up. Unfortunately it seems to me that Miss Mahood also tends to lose touch with the concrete details of some of her material and to lack a focussing literary-critical discipline. Her thesis is that English poets of the seventeenth century and their continental counterparts, and also artists in the other chief media, had achieved a spiritual and emotional re-integration after the Renaissance upheaval and the Mannerist depression; they contrived to combine faith in man and faith in matter with faith in God and faith in spirit. This is the essence of Baroque art of all kinds. Though it takes in the whole range of human experience, it is theocentric and consequently, however restless in appearance, ultimately assured and stable.

I feel that a certain weakness in Miss Mahood's critical apparatus begins to show itself when, for example, she writes:

> 'But without complete integrity of feeling, perfect artistic skill . . .' (p. 10).

as if the two could be considered separately. Later she implies that not only can one have great devotional poetry—Vaughan's—which is not perhaps in quite the first class as poetry (p. 295), a proposition one tentatively agrees to, but also that one can have great poetry on religious themes which is not great devotional poetry and even devotional verse which is irreligious (pp. 49 and 53). The exact relationship between devotional poetry and poetry is never explained, though there are some good passages on the differences between genuinely religious poetry and pietistic verse 'where writers say what they desire to feel' (pp. 10 and 22-23). Again though it is common knowledge that Milton was influenced by the seventeenth century Spenserians, it seems too much to claim that they created a new style, integrating Spenserian and Metaphysical elements, of which the exponents were, besides Milton who in any case early dispensed with Metaphysical wit altogether, Joseph Beaumont, Henry More and Crashaw (p. 171). I wonder why she does not include Marvell after Miss Bradbrook's and Miss Lloyd Thomas's

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account of *Upon Appleton House* and of the conception of metamorphosis. The following passage seems to me either extremely derogatory to Herbert, or else to imply an unacceptable account of Symbolism:

> 'Here we find the ambiguity that characterizes all Metaphysical poetry, but whereas Herbert's ambiguities arise from different verbal meanings, those of Vaughan are due to different symbolic values in the object itself—the method used by the modern Symbolist poets'. (p. 253).

The idea of Symbolism has been a poetic programme, but surely to the critic that kind of imagery, if it works, differs only in degree, not in kind, from any other. Some of the complexities of meaning she attributes to Vaughan are not, I feel, in the poetry at all, but are read into it from biographical sources. Nonetheless this is an illuminating and helpful chapter.

In these various examples one has the impression that Miss Mahood has failed to integrate her studies of style and subject matter and consequently both fails to make critical distinctions and is inclined to read into poetry themes and attitudes which are not fully realized. I find the chapter comparing George Herbert and Christina Rossetti admirable in its main outlines, but I think that Herbert's greatness, and, if one uses that word of him, one should not use it in any connotation of Christina Rossetti, depends on more than his theocentricity. There is also his command of language and rhythm, his delicacy of tone, his mature grasp of experience and the effects of the community, and the family from which he came. Possibly, if Miss Mahood replied that without his theocentricity these more superficial features would lose much of their power, I might be compelled to agree, but I should still maintain that degrees of theocentricity alone do not differentiate between Herbert and Vaughan, let alone Quarles. Too great a concern with fundamentals, to repeat a *Scrutiny* platitude, is ruinous to literary criticism; one reads the following passage on Milton with increasing disagreement:

> 'As a religious poet, his world-view differs only in some non-essential details from that of Donne and his followers, and nothing could be more in tune with Milton's thought than Donne's definition: "Rectified reason is religion". . . . and it is Milton's choice of the epic form which, more than any profound divergence of belief, divides him from the Metaphysical poets. The epic form, with its deliberate, objective remoteness of its author from his subject—a detachment which an occasional personal digression only throws into higher relief—enables Milton to show the perfect round of which the Metaphysical lyrics are the fragmentary arcs'. (pp. 206-7).

The last sentence cannot, I believe, be substantiated. If, as she says, voicing a common feeling of their similarity, the *Nativity Ode* is Baroque, then Donne is not; the Metaphysicals do not 'deserve'

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to be called Baroque as much as Milton. I am not concerned to deny the community of thought and interests between Donne and Milton and others. The differences between the effects of their poetry in all its concrete particularity do not need me to state them. I am not familiar with the great mass of continental criticism on the Baroque in the visual arts and in literature, but I am very doubtful about the wide applicability of the term to English work. Wren was, we know, influenced by Borromini, but the international Baroque style reached England late and did not spread far before it was superseded by the Palladian revival. The ecstatic feeling and demonstrative intention of Crashaw's St. Teresa poems reminds one of the rapt expressions and studied emotional gestures in much Baroque painting and sculpture, though I cannot think of anything corresponding to his simpler colloquial phrases. Further than this it is, I think, probably not only dangerous but pointless to go. Miss Mahood is however interested in *zeitgeists*, and, though she is aware of the risks of generalization and in the use of terms not yet fully defined, she can commit herself to the following:

> 'Yet the more insular writers, such as Herbert, Vaughan and Traherne, share with continental artists the fundamental qualities of the style. Although at first sight there may seem to be no common factor beween, say, *The Temple* and the Gesù ceiling, both have their origins in similar inner experiences, similar conclusions reached about the nature of man'. (p. 134).

I have seldom seen a better illustration of Blake's terse remark about generalizations. Crashaw wrote a hymn *To the Name above every Name*, in which, as in Gaulli's magnificent vision, the hosts of the blest and the powers of nature adore . . . the dazzling light of Thy Dread majesty. Certain comparisons might be relevant here, but I see no similarity between the asymmetrical and exuberantly overflowing composition on the vault of the Gesù and Herbert's restrained and carefully simplified lyrics. There may be other and more reasonable parallels, and passages in some of Donne's sermons may have affinities with Baroque pictures or sculpture, but I doubt if there is any analogy anywhere with the peculiar urbanity and refinement of tone and feeling which characterizes in different ways George Herbert, the Cavaliers and Marvell. It reminds one more of minor Quattrocento Florentine sculpture—to throw out another rash suggestion, but as pointed as saying that two men are both seventeenth century Christians. In this way Miss Mahood loses essential touch with the literature she is dealing with. I do not see much value in discussing underlying spirits which do not manifest themselves in particular and analysable artistic effects. It is not literary criticism, which concerns itself as much with the surface as with the depths and as much with differences as with similarities. It is not, I believe, a valuable kind of cultural history since the evidence on which it is based is so tenuous. It seems to me that Miss Mahood has done a good deal to spoil a book with much valuable matter in it,

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and was ambitious to spoil it still further. To carry out the scheme of Dr. W. Stechow, quoted in her notes (p. 315) would require such complicated attention to national and local differences and allowances for time lags, that I doubt if it would take one far beyond the separate studies of Baroque art already made. One has a feeling that the ghost of Dr. Spengler still walks abroad.

GEOFFREY WALTON.

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